DOING GENDER IN EVERYDAY SITUATIONS: AN EXAMINATION OF HETEROSEXUAL DATING

By

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This study uses the concept of "doing gender" to better understand the ways in which dating couples draw on and modify traditional gender role expectations to shape the parameters of their developing relationships. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 undergraduate heterosexual couples who were involved in new dating relationships. Partners were interviewed jointly and individually to examine the gendered components of their relationships.

This study indicates that couples use culturally prescribed gender behaviors as a model in establishing their initial relationships. This is particularly true in regard to financial responsibility and sexual initiation. However, as the relationship develops, the partners provide each other with opportunities to negotiate and practice nontraditional gender behavior. These nontraditional gender

roles become part of the culture of the relationship itself, thus altering the prescribed roles and allowing additional variation. The idea of "doing gender" suggests that this link between micro- and macrosociological processes not only recreates the expected gender displays on the level of the individual, but helps to create new gender expressions at the societal level.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The Problem

In many areas of daily life gender roles are changing to allow for greater flexibility in the lives of men and women. The portrayal of gender is less rigid than in the past. One area in which traditional gender roles have persisted, however, is the arena of heterosexual dating (Rose and Frieze, 1993). While some recent studies have suggested that a loosening of gender roles in dating is taking place insofar as women do seem to be initiating dates, such studies tend to include couples at all stages of dating relationships, not just couples in the formation stage when traditional or expected gender roles are likely to have their greatest influence (Mongeau et al., 1993). Research indicates that the longer the association couples have with each other, the more comfortable they will feel in violating traditional gender expectations with regard to dating scripts. First dates or even newly formed couples would be less likely to deviate from the prescribed dating behaviors than couples who have a considerable history together. More liberal attitudes toward dating serve as a marker for changing gender role expectations.

The current study focuses on the gender displays, attitudes, and behaviors that couples exhibit in dating relationships. Using a theoretical perspective that looks at gender as a socially constructed task and product of interaction, rather than as pre-existing characteristics of the participants in a dating scenario, the goal of the present study is to understand the strategies that men and women use to present an image of themselves that is appropriate and believable in a dating situation (Berger and Luchman, 1966; Heritage, 1984; Gubrium, Holstein and Buckholdt, 1994).

Goffman (1976, p. 77) suggests "any scene, it appears, can be defined as an occasion for the depiction of gender differences, and in any scene a resource can be found for effecting the display" (emphasis in original). The scene for the current study is dating. Interviews with currently dating couples provide a social framework in which to observe the production and reproduction of gender. They afford an opportunity to examine the gender displays that characterize individuals as belonging to a particular sex-class (Goffman, 1976). While dating is a crucial element in this study and provides the social situation and context for the research, the relationship between dating and gender expression or display is what is empirically problematic.

The focus of the analysis is on the interactions that occur between dating partners. By its nature interaction is

reflexive, negotiable, and changeable. This interactional approach to the study of dating and gender is different than other approaches that suggest a unidirectional mechanism of process. Socialization, adaptation, and oppression as explanations for the presence of gender in social situations would suggest that once gender is learned, adjusted to, or acted out in opposition to a dominant force, gender has been established (Gerson and Peiss, 1985). The current approach suggests that gender is a constantly changing, but omnipresent factor in social interactions. There is not a point at which the work of gender is complete. There is, however, a "schedule for the portrayal of gender" (Goffman, 1976, p. 76) and this recurs throughout interactions.

The sociological literature on contemporary dating in general is fairly limited and no studies take the "doing gender" approach. Few studies have been conducted since the early 1980's when Knox and Wilson (1981) reported on the dating behaviors of students at East Carolina University and Korman (1980) studied the impact of feminist identity on dating at the University of Florida. Of the more recent studies of dating, few look specifically at women's initiation of dating and sexual relationships, areas in which the negotiation and work of gender are likely to be critical due to traditional expectations. When these questions about nontraditional behaviors are asked, it is usually among only established dating couples, not those

persons just forming or considering a relationship (Lottes, 1993). A popular way for information about dating to be presented is in advice format where the expert tries to answer questions and advise the dater (e.g. Laner, 1992). In general there are little or no current data about dating.

One explanation for the dearth of dating studies is that researchers in the 1970's proposed that dating was becoming obsolete (Murstein, 1980) or was being replaced by a new way of dating called "getting together" (Libby, 1976). These researchers felt that dating was declining, moving away from preparation for marriage toward recreation, and was no longer an essential research topic. There was an assumption among these researchers that dating proceeds in a very orderly and gender specific way and that little or no deviation occurs. This may have been the case in the 1960s and 1970s. However, one need only look at the advice columns in teenage girls' magazines to see that the kinds of dating advice currently being given do not reflect one single gender role for women in relationships. Women and men are defining their dating behaviors in many different ways, e.g. talking, going out, hanging out, etc., and the literature has failed to pursue the different ways in which dating couples see, describe, create and utilize their dating relationships. Some of these gaps in the sociological literature may be filled by research from the standpoint of "doing gender" and "gender display." The current study

argues that one of the essential tasks of dating is the creation, expression, negotiation, and maintenance of gender. By understanding more about how couples in newly forming relationships negotiate gender, the salience of gender in dating and the dynamics of dating in modern society are made clearer.

This research focuses on a commonplace situation in which gender is a key factor, where a gender display is work being done. In heterosexual dating, the production of and accountability for gendered behavior, language, attitudes, etc. is of central importance. Because of the nature of heterosexual dating, interactions between male and female participants have been governed by expected gender behaviors. Rose and Frieze (1993) found this to be true when they asked students about a recent first date. In an intimate relationship in its early stages, displays of gender reinforce the societal expectations about appropriate male and female behaviors. Regardless of their prior friendship, acquaintanceship, or association, when a couple enters that point in their relationship where a romantic interest is perceived as a possibility by both partners, their association is now of a different type and is likely to be perceived as different by the participants.

This status change from "friend" to "potential partner" may be quite difficult because different expectations are included when the relationship between the actors changes.

The gender rules that govern dating then come into play. Couples may alter traditional dating gender prescriptions, but still are constrained by the bounds of tradition and societal sanction. Any changes that the couple enact will still be evaluated by conventional and societal norms.

In some instances dating has been characterized as a game, with participants making carefully planned and researched strategical moves (Ehrmann, 1964). The male works to impress the woman and gain sexual favor while the woman works to limit her sexual favors and maintain her social position. Using this approach one might take a cynical view of the participants, try to anticipate the next move, or focus on the societal norms regarding dating behavior. The current study approaches dating as a socially constructed venue in which to study people at work on the production of gender. Dating is embedded in the framework of partner selection and teenage ritual, both having gender imperatives, but it is also a social situation of an individual nature in which gender may be examined. Dating is, at once, a personal and societal phenomenon. For the current study, persons in newly forming dating relationships will be examined to see how gender is constructed on a microsocial level, between the partners.

If, as Ehrmann (1964) suggested, dating has a ritualized game quality, one could consider the changes in the game on the societal level over time. If the

negotiations of daters in the past were predicated on sexual favors in exchange for love or marriage, partners today may still desire these outcomes or may express interest in different results. Gender displays have always been a key component in the interactions between dating couples, with one's gender determining the outcomes of a date that one was supposed to desire. The process of reaching the desired outcomes has likely changed as standards regarding premarital sex and marriage have changed.

Within dating relationships, particularly based on historical patterns, certain behaviors have typically been delegated to one sex or the other. These gendered behaviors become almost ritualized and certainly are common knowledge among daters. The continual acting out and recreating of gender differences constitutes "doing gender" and, more specifically, are a "gender display." Because of their historical gender limitations, these areas provide key points to examine in the current research on the production, maintenance, and accountability of gender in newly established dating couples. Three key areas in gender display are date initiation, expense paying, and sexual initiation.

Utilizing data from student respondents, the Korman (1980) and Knox and Wilson (1981) studies provide a background and impetus for the current study. The concerns raised by these researchers are still important for

examining the behaviors of today's daters. Knox and Wilson (1981) administered a questionnaire consisting of 21 closed-ended questions to 227 female and 107 male undergraduates in randomly selected classes at a state university in the Southeast. The response rate was 60%. They asked questions about how respondents met partners, what activities they participated in on dates, what they talked about on dates, what sexual behaviors they engaged in, what values they endorsed, and the role of parents in dating.

The most frequently cited way to meet dating partners was through a friend, with one-third of the respondents selecting this answer. At a party, at work, in class, and other, representing unique ways to meet a partner, were also chosen but not as frequently as through a friend. The most frequent dating activity for the respondents was going out to eat and going back to one person's residence. Most often the daters reported that the topic of conversation was their relationship. Approximately one-third talked about this. Other conversation topics included school and friends, but sex was discussed less than 5% of the time. All of these common dating events provide a ready location in which the participants do gender.

In the areas of sexual behaviors there were noticeable gender differences. Most respondents indicated that kissing was appropriate within a short time of knowing the partner; 70% of the men compared to 50% of the women felt this was

appropriate on the first date. By the fourth date, all of the men and all but 3% of the women felt kissing was appropriate. Petting, which the researchers defined as "hands anywhere," showed quite a gender difference. Only one-third of the men, compared to over three-fourths of the women felt petting should be postponed until after the fourth date. One-half of the men and 25% of the women felt that intercourse was appropriate by the fifth date. These data lend support to the notion that a relationship context is important for women's expression of their sexuality. Additionally, they indicate the traditional notions of masculine and feminine behaviors were being reinforced in the sexual aspects of the couple's relationship.

Knox and Wilson (1981) also asked about encouraging and discouraging sexual intimacy. One-fourth of the men and one-third of the women encouraged intimacy by being "open about sex desires and expectations." Other techniques used by respondents included setting the mood, moving toward the partner, hinting about interest, and expressing love. When it came time to discourage intimacy, one-half of the women and one-third of the men told the partner to stop. Other techniques included ignoring sexual advances and keeping one's distance.

The "doing gender" idea argues that different techniques for encouraging or discouraging intimacy should be expected. While women and men are involved in the

production of gender, they are also accountable to society for the gender that they do. Some actions are within the behavioral repertoire of men, others in the repertoire of women. When an unexpected strategy is used, there may be a question about the masculinity or femininity of the actor. While focusing on gender in dating, the current study suggests differing expectations and influences for women and men in the dating arena. This accountability limits or expands the gendered behaviors that can be expected of dating persons in interaction by making their behavior available for societal scrutiny.

The Korman study (1980; 1983) was grounded in an exchange perspective suggesting that "feminists engage in nontraditional behaviors more than nonfeminists in order to equalize the bargaining element in dating relations." Her respondents, 400 unmarried, undergraduate women at another state university in the Southeast, were asked to complete questionnaires about their dating behaviors, attitudes toward feminism, and experiences with date rape. She then compared the responses of feminist and nonfeminist women to ascertain the impact of a feminist orientation on dating. To more sharply contrast feminist and nonfeminist women, respondents in the middle range were dropped from further analysis, yielding a total of 258 respondents. Respondents classified as feminist were far more likely to initiate and pay for dates than the nonfeminist women. Seventy percent of

feminist women had paid for dates compared to 40% of the nonfeminists. Feminists had initiated an average of 5.3 dates and shared expenses on these female initiated dates 71% of the time. Nonfeminists had initiated 2.2 dates, on average, and shared expenses for the female initiated dates only 46% of the time. An interesting finding of this study was that both groups of women reported that they believed men wanted more sexual activity on the dates than they did when the men paid. The traditional notion of exchanging money for sex was evident in this study.

In the Korman (1983) study even traditional women were asking men out and participating in nontraditional behaviors. Traditional dates are what the public most often pictures a date to be. Gender roles form the basis of interaction for the couple. These behaviors are presented through cultural scripts, societal guidelines for how interaction between actors should appropriately proceed. In terms of dating, these scripts have gender as a central component. Gender divides the duties of a date into "his" and "hers". In traditional dating the roles of men and women are separate and clearly defined.

For men, the traditional date involves asking the woman out, planning the activities for the date, driving, and paying. In some scripts it may be appropriate for the man to make sexual advances (LaManna and Riedmann, 1994). For a woman, the traditional date situation requires that she

accept or decline (by letting him down easy), look nice, be typically feminine, and rebuff, at least in a token way, the sexual advances of her partner (Allgeier and McCormick, 1982). Women are to be demure and passive in a dating situation by allowing men to ask, plan, drive, and pay. Additional "helpless" behaviors, (e.g. waiting for him to open doors, having him order food for her) help to secure her position in the dating scenario (Larkin, 1979).

Nontraditional dating, in contrast, puts less pressure on either partner to play a specified role. Ideally the situation involves relaxed attitudes about appropriate male and female behavior and a more androgynous set of expectations. This script is characterized by egalitarian gender roles, mutuality, and sharing. The research on dating most often characterizes nontraditional dating as "getting together". "Getting together" (Libby, 1976) involves group dating, less formal activities, either partner paying, meeting the partner at a convenient location, and less emphasis on marriage. For the purposes of the current study, nontraditional dating refers to any situation, behavior, or activity that is contrary to the standardized norms of traditional dating. While "getting together" has traditionally meant a group focus in dating, the present study deals with persons in one-on-one interactions with their dating partners.

An understanding of gender displays and actions in dating behaviors has practical significance as well. One area of the dating literature that has proliferated over the last decade pertains to date rape. The expectations that both men and women have regarding dates and their respective roles on those dates has been found to be an essential variable in the explanation of date rape prevalence (Muehlenhard and Linton, 1987; Stets and Pirog-Good, 1989). Historically, there has been an expectation that women will be passive, particularly in the area of sexuality and will provide "token" resistance. These are gender displays that women have been expected to present to appear "womanly." When the displays are not made, they may receive a sanction, such as the label of tramp. Even when the resistance is not a "token" men may interpret this behavior as "no means yes." When women and men do not agree on the roles, research indicates that men may use sexual force to gain the upper hand in the relationship. If gender roles in the area of dating are indeed changing, the more active role that women today may be permitted to take could lessen their chances of becoming the victims of unwanted sexual advances by a dating partner. By asserting themselves through asking for the date or displaying gender that may not fit the societal norm, women may be indicating to their partners that they expect treatment as equals and will share the power in the relationship with men, even in the sexual arena.

Another area of practical significance in dating pertains to the use of contraception. When a woman initiates a date, she may be more likely to plan for any sexual activity that may occur and would, therefore, be prepared when it does occur. If she initiated the date, she may have more power in decisions regarding contraception. Negotiations about contraception indicate an aspect of dating in which the production of gender will occur. Based on biology and the possibility of pregnancy, women should have more concerns than men about the choice of contraception. Gerrard et al. (1990) found that women, regardless of their dominance or submission had a fair amount of influence in decisions about contraception because they generally knew more about contraception than their male partners and had a greater interest in preventing pregnancy. The authors suggested that since this was a task that could be considered "feminine", the female had more influence. The study did not distinguish between different methods of contraception, however. The researchers were more concerned with the bargaining process of the couple and whose opinion had more influence. It may be the case that with condoms, a "male" method, the male has more influence in the use of the contraception. Doing gender would suggest that the couple has negotiated condoms to be in the domain of men and therefore, a "manly" contraceptive. For a woman to use or suggest this method, she will act in a "male" manner. For

women in a dating relationship this may be extremely important because condoms are the best protection against sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS. A woman who initiates the date, already contradicting expected gender roles, may be more likely to influence her partner to wear a condom.

If, as many researchers have proposed, dating is seen as a rehearsal for marriage, date initiation and other decisions made frequently among dating couples are important. A relationship in which the woman has the freedom to initiate dating and sexual contact may indicate that the partners expect to have a more egalitarian orientation toward gender in a subsequent marriage. One could argue that the gender roles and skills negotiated during a dating relationship provide the foundation for the roles and skills that will be employed in the marriage. Cate and Lloyd (1985) have argued that the first stage in the family life cycle is courtship. Consequently one's dating behaviors and attitudes are important for one's future marital relationship.

For teachers of family sociology, the information available about dating is either historical or out-of-date, representing the traditional patterns of the 1950's and 1960's. When an instructor talks to students about dating, those students are interested in data on what their peers are doing, as well as what their parents did. Unfortunately, the studies of dating that are being presented in textbooks

still adhere to a fairly traditional orientation. Those nontraditional studies that are presented focus on the "new technologies" in dating such as singles' advertisements, video dating, and computer matching services (Ahuvia and Adelman, 1992). New information on the behaviors of dating couples, particularly their negotiation of gender and subsequent display, would help family sociologists in the classroom as well as in their own research.

Most studies of dating have utilized an exchange perspective arguing that equity in relationships and a perceived fairness of exchange predict a successful coupling that results in marriage. Other approaches, however, might also provide insight into changing gender roles and the acceptability of these changes. In an effort to examine the challenges of dating from a gender perspective, this study examines the expression and accountability of gender as it is displayed in a dating situation. Rooted in ethnomethodology, this study utilizes the concept of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1991) which conceives of gender as an "emergent feature of social situations" (p.14). In this approach gender is the way in which one portrays the normative attitudes and activities dictated by one's sex category, male or female. Actors are held accountable for how successful they are in doing gender to present the appropriate qualities for their assigned sex category.

The current study focuses on heterosexual dating, but in a different way than have prior dating studies. Utilizing the theoretical concept of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1991), dating is seen as one venue in which to study the work of maintaining, creating, and expressing gender. Dating is an arena for gender display. Taking this approach, then, makes gender, rather than dating, the key research element. Questions revolve around the expression and creation of gender rather than what dating is, who is dating, how often, etc. A specific definition of dating is not important for answering these research questions. A socially known and constructed everyday use of the term dating that has a common sense understanding by both researcher and participant is sufficient to ensure that they are communicating about a particular social situation. For those persons concerned with partner selection and social activities, date is a widely accepted term to indicate the social association between potential partners. As a social situation for studying gender, dating provides much information about one's gender role orientation and attitudes. Additionally, dating provides a unique opportunity in which couples can negotiate gender. It is a romantic context, unlike the peer group, and in the initial stages of dating, issues of permanence and commitment may not have arisen.

The Purposes

The global purpose of this study is to explore dating as an example of the theoretical concept "doing gender." The focus is on gender role-related behaviors in dating. The display of these gender images occurs in everyday situations. By examining how persons make claims regarding gender, the researcher will be able to examine the creation and maintenance of gender on a microsocial level. While gender is done on multiple social levels, both micro and macro, this initial analysis will form the foundation for an actual and theoretically driven link between the expression of gender on a micro level and the expression of gender on an institutional level. This research project will look at a familiar social situation, dating, in a new light and will illustrate the concepts of doing gender and gender display. In the research literature, the notion of "doing gender" has only been applied to the arena of employment. Primarily the focus has been on how women create male or female roles and actions in the work sphere (e.g. Fenstermaker, 1991; Hall, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). The present study extends "doing gender" into another arena where gender is an essential task, personal relationships.

Expectations

Based on the literature and applying the concept of "doing gender," which draws from ethonomethodological and

constructionist perspectives (West and Zimmerman, 1991), several expectations have arisen. As a social situation, dating provides a useful arena in which to examine people at work in the production of gender because one of the goals of dating is interaction with a partner. In the early stages of dating, one makes claims about masculinity and femininity. Early dating relationships are likely characterized by high gender role adherence and partner expectation. In this manner, the behaviors that couples exhibit with each other are likely to follow traditional gender expectations so that claims of masculinity and femininity are supported easily.

The areas of female date initiation, female expense sharing, and female sexual initiation will most likely require more negotiation and different strategies than when these acts are initiated by men. Since gender displays are held accountable, when one violates that expected gender display, such as a woman asking to pay for date expenses, accountability issues become important. It is expected that women use different strategies in asking so that these traditionally male tasks are not necessarily interpreted by either the man or woman as a violation of "womanly" behavior. Mongeau and colleagues suggest that "the female initiation of a date is a relatively common experience" (1991, p. 52). Given the likelihood that women will ask men out, exploring the strategies that women use to maintain their impression of femaleness is a useful endeavor.

Since this study focuses on newly established dating relationships, the expense sharing behaviors are expected to be a prominent part of dating experiences. Lottes (1993) has suggested that women contribute more financially when they are in a steady relationship with only one partner than when they are dating several men at once. Doing gender would suggest that in the early stages of a relationship the gender displays that the partners present would be very important. Following traditional gender roles makes it easy to relate to the partner and present the socially expected image. When there are questions over the behavior that should be exhibited, there is a tendency to follow the normative standards of the society. When women pay for dates there is a risk that they will be perceived as less feminine and the partner, as well as friends, may question the authenticity of their gender display. To maintain an authentic and believable gender display, a woman will have to approach the issue of her financial contribution in a different way than her male partner. He does not have to negotiate the right or opportunity to pay; it is expected that he will do so. She, however, may have to negotiate the conditions under which her paying is permissible and does not challenge either his or her gender presentation.

Because first dates tend to be far more scripted than interactions that occur once a relationship has been established (Rose and Frieze, 1993), and this study deals

with newly formed relationships, it is expected that the participants in this study will cite traditional activities as part of their dating experiences. This is again a way in which the partners are displaying gender. In traditional settings it is likely that traditional gender roles are expected and expressed. After a few dates, however, these daters may introduce their partners into the activities of their group of associates. At this point accountability is on a wider range. More persons are involved in evaluating one's gender performance and work.

Given the traditional gender role perception regarding sexuality with which all daters are familiar, the expectation is that men initiate all sexual contact. It is a manly activity. Women risk the appearance of forwardness or promiscuity when they initiate sexual contact, not the kind of gender display that is the norm of female behavior. Initiating a dating relationship does not automatically suggest, however, that a woman will initiate sexual contact in that relationship. While studies have indicated that women may be viewed as more willing to have sex when they initiate the date (Muehlenhard and Scardino, 1985), there are no data to suggest that these women actually initiate sexual contact as well, nor how they are likely to go about the initiation. In a study of nontraditional gender roles among college students, Lottes (1993) reported that while 74% of the 237 women in her sample had asked a man on a

date, only 38% of the sample had initiated that first sexual involvement with a new partner. While 78% of these women felt that men and women equally should be able to initiate a sexual relationship, their reported behaviors indicated that men were more likely to be the sexual initiators. One factor that may influence women to initiate sexual relationships is having asked a number of men out on dates. If women are willing to repeatedly violate the cultural script of dating initiation, they may be more willing to violate the cultural expectations of male initiation of sexual contact.

In addition, those women who are more sexually experienced may be more confident of and comfortable with their sexuality and may be more willing to assert themselves in a new sexual situation (Macklin, 1983). A key issue to keep in mind is the way in which women are initiating the sexual contact. It is expected, based on traditional dating scripts, that women will demonstrate more hinting behaviors than open requests for sex from their male partners. Hinting is doing "female", thus her claims to the sex category female will usually not be questioned. Females likely maintain their "female status" by staying away from aggressive means to achieve sexual intimacy and utilizing more subtle hinting behaviors.

The link between date initiation, date expense sharing, and sexual initiation is no doubt a complex one. A key element, however, is that these behaviors and the attitudes

surrounding them are mediated by gender. The creation and maintenance of gender goes on in these key parts of the dating experience. Observations of and interviews with dating couples will likely demonstrate that gender construction is a large part of the work that couples do in interaction, particularly in a relationship context.

The expression of gender between partners has always been an element of key importance in dating. Today, from casual observation, it may appear that partners behave in less gendered ways. This change suggests an interesting point of sociological significance. For persons interested in understanding dating a key question may be to ask if there has been a real change in the expression of gender, and does this indicate a change in how dates proceed, the expected outcomes for daters, and possibly a change in what constitutes a date.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will review the literature in the major areas relevant to this study. There are three main areas of concern. The first section discusses the theoretical orientations of the study. In this section the concepts of gender display and doing gender are presented. Since the social situation in which the production of gender will be examined is dating, a history of dating, focusing on gender, is discussed. Finally, because there are areas in dating that have recently become "gender battlegrounds," research that considers violations of traditionally expected gender behaviors will also be considered. This last section is called current dating behaviors and attitudes.

Doing Gender

The theoretical standpoint that underlies this research is rooted in ethnomethodology and makes use of the concept of "doing gender" (West and Zimmerman, 1991). In this approach, which seeks to demonstrate the omnipresence of gender in the lives of men and women, different levels of society can be examined and found to be involved in the work of gender. From the sociological standpoint of "doing

gender" then, gender is a "routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment" (West and Zimmerman, 1991, p.13); it is achieved rather than ascribed. This accomplishment, occurring through interaction, is on both the microsociological and macrosociological levels. For example, women's inequality is not only perpetuated by the system of employment that separates men and women into different jobs, but is also recreated within individual companies, offices, and interactions that employees experience on a daily basis (Fenstermaker et al., 1991).

Prior to a discussion of the literature about doing gender, a discussion of gender display (Goffman, 1976) provides an informing perspective. Gender display refers to "conventionalized portrayals of these [culturally established] correlates" of sex that are by definition gender (p.69). The expression of gender displays varies by the situation and the actor's role within that situation. Displays are almost ritual-like in that they tend to follow rules of presentation regardless of the social situation in which they are appropriate. Displays (1) contain a statement-reply interaction such that a display from one elicits a display from another; (2) are most prominent at beginnings and endings of activities, but also continue throughout an activity without altering that activity; (3) need identification of the social position of the person performing the display to be successful; (4) may contain

multiple pieces of social information; (5) vary greatly in their formality; (6) are optional; (7) provide broad information about social relationships, but generally are not about one specific social relationship (Goffman provides the example of social relationships that involve kissing and the different "meanings" of the kiss.); (8) are always within human awareness with regard to when it is safe to perform a certain display. Thus they choose when, where, and in whose company, to enact a particular display.

When gender displays are being considered, the expression of one's gender based on biological criteria is important. Society suggests it is a moral imperative to act as one's biological sex dictates. As Goffman (1976, p.75) indicates, "one of the most deeply seated traits of man, it is felt, is gender; femininity and masculinity are in a sense the prototypes of essential expression-something that can be conveyed fleetingly in any social situation and yet something that strikes at the most basic characterization of the individual." The display of these "taken-as-essential" expressions is scheduled such that the appropriate gender display is presented. The content or nature of the display, i.e. what behaviors are presented, varies for men and women, but that is the only distinction. Goffman focuses on the willingness of actors to follow a schedule for the portrayal of gender. This provides continuity in one's behavior. As a result, the competence and willingness of persons to present

the appropriate gender displays links them to the particular sex-class for which the displays are appropriate. Goffman concludes that while gender expressions and displays are in essence a show, "a considerable amount of the substance of society is enrolled in the staging of it" (1976, p.76).

For couples in the social situation of dating, where Goffman would suggest mutual monitoring is occurring, there are expected displays that reinforce the gender alliances of the participants. Following the notion of display, one could argue that the tendency for women to be late for a date, while real or mythical, is a display that links her with the sex-class of female. It is "like a woman" to be late for a date. This tardiness also occurs at the beginning of the activity, a time when Goffman suggests ritual gender displays would be most prominent.

Like Goffman's conception of gender display as expression and his discussion of the arrangement between the sexes (1976, 1977), the doing gender approach uses the term gender in a unique way. Gender is "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (West and Zimmerman, 1991, p. 14). As Gerson and Peiss (1985) suggest, "gender is defined by socially constructed relationships between women and men, among women, and among men in social groups."

The current study focuses on the gender work between women and men in the context of dating. In our culture, biology has been given an important role in the expression of gender. Being male or female is largely defined by biological criteria, one's genitalia. For the most part, persons born biologically male are "male" in that they can be categorized as such. In our culture biological sex and category status are linked. It is taken for granted that one who acts like a woman is a female and that she has the biology to prove it. According to West and Zimmerman (1991) this sex category is what is displayed in physical appearance and we act as if that is always correct. Gender, then, is "being" the social category. This is adhering to and recreating the normative societal attributions for one who has been placed in your sex category. This link between physical appearance and adherence to socially prescribed behaviors presents a gender management crisis for those whose biology and social expression are incongruent (Garfinkel, 1967).

"Doing gender" represents that situation in which gender is not simply a property or characteristic that an actor <u>has</u>, it is something that an actor <u>does</u>. For example, in Garfinkel's report on Agnes, female was not a biological property of Agnes, but was a social conception of herself that she cultivated by displaying and doing "female" (1967). Doing gender is accomplished in interaction with others when

the expected role, attitude or behavior is demonstrated. Everyone is accountable to society for the gender that is accomplished. If the gender one does is appropriate, falling within "manly" behavior for males and "womanly" behavior for females, that interaction is successful in the sense that gender has been done and one's behavior was not even considered, much less questioned. Competent members of society act within the bounds of gender and also reproduce it. This production and reproduction of gender results in its use and recognition as a category and fundamental division of society.

Gender is at the same time an outcome of social arrangements and a rationale for them (West and Zimmerman, 1991). The emergence of gender in social situations has meaning within the specific social contexts in which it occurs and is work being done. Through the perpetuation of stereotypical dating roles, dating couples provide support for their own gender distinct behaviors. The social arrangement that puts men in the position to initiate dates and women in the position to wait for the invitation reinforces the passivity and inferiority of women in society in general and the dating relationship in particular.

In terms of doing gender, outcomes are important because the goal is to maintain membership in the sex category. This is dictated by the situation but involves acting in either a gender-appropriate way or a "purposefully

gender-inappropriate" way. Regardless, one is still accountable. Inappropriate behavior has to have a purpose, or situational context that makes it accountable. Consequently, the situation in which the doing of gender is embedded gives clues to the actors about what is tolerated, expected, demanded, ignored, etc.

The work of gender, maintaining one's place as a man or woman, often goes unnoticed. Fenstermaker et al. (1991) argue that gender is a natural, normal, and often unnoticed part of interactions. Gender production occurs in all situations regardless of the intent of the actors. Fenstermaker et al. (1991) are not saying that people consciously do the work of gender, rather this work is a feature of social structure, social situations, and social interactions; for the most part actors are unaware of gender production. The situational importance of gender may vary in that accomplishing gender successfully may be the whole goal of the interaction. The arena in which the gender work occurs has an impact on the salience of the work that is done. In the area of dating, doing gender is very important. Embedded in a system that expects different abilities, intelligences, and personality traits based on one's biological sex and social expression of that sex, dating demands that the gender one does is highly authentic and the claims one makes to a gender category must be supported. Because of the rules of gender that apply in dating, that

manly and womanly behaviors demand different actions or reactions of men and women, there is a lot for which dating couples are held accountable.

Gender, as work to be done in interaction, has been examined by researchers in the area of discourse analysis. Cahill (1986) was concerned with the acquisition of gender identity in children and hypothesized that language use helps very young children identify self and others as belonging to particular gender categories. The social validation by others, particularly other children, of the child's adherence to a certain gender identity is an important reinforcer of that identity. Cahill argues that "children acquire a behavioral commitment to their socially bestowed sex identity in the course of exploring the vocabulary of social identification" (1986, p. 303). In essence children are doing gender, but as Cahill's study demonstrates, at very early ages much of their interaction work is sex segregated.

Fishman (1978) also considered interaction to be work and noted that the maintenance of interaction through conversation is largely the work of women. Not only is there an expectation that women keep the conversation going, but their concern over talk is what makes them women. In this regard, the women do gender when they use strategies to keep conversations going between their partners and themselves. These strategies used by partners to enhance or hinder

interaction include making statements, minimal response, attention beginnings, asking "d'ya know", and asking questions. More recent studies (e.g. Tannen, 1990) also support these conclusions.

Fishman also pointed to power as a key factor in constructing and enforcing a definition of reality in interactions, particularly between male-female dyads. Due to the "natural" quality of women's interaction skills, the notion that interaction is work is often obscured. Fishman suggested that because the work of interaction is "related to what constitutes being a woman" (1978, p. 405), it is seldom seen as work. Orienting to the idea that gender and interaction involve work enables us to see the hierarchy present in our daily lives. For couples in dating relationships the work that goes into gender likely goes unnoticed and the focus is on developing the relationship and behaving in the "right" way.

Hall (1993) examined doing gender in an occupational context. After examining restaurants with mixed gender staffs she concluded that "to give good service is to 'do gender' by performing gendered scripts" (p. 452). The scripts differed by gender and work role. The scripts involved friendliness, deference, and flirting, depending on the type of restaurant. Hall's assumption of a gendered organization perspective assumes "gender is embedded in the

organizational logic of job evaluation, promotion, procedures, and job specifications" (1993, p. 453).

The current study assumes that gender is an essential element in dating relationships, is the primary work being done, and that how well the partners do gender has consequences for their future. Just as the nature of the service occupation and social expectations accompanying it lead to the production of a particular gender role in the restaurants Hall studied, the social situation of dating provides participants with expected gender roles, behaviors, and attitudes and provides a social context in which accountability and appropriateness are monitored. Thus, mate/partner selection and activities are part of a gendered relationship structure.

Focusing on the work of gender in dating relationships will likely demonstrate not only the different culturally assigned tasks, but also point toward the arrangement between the partners of any heterosexual couple. Among the situations in which gender is seen most clearly are those in which a breech of expected gender roles has occurred. Those nontraditional gender behaviors such as female date initiation, expense sharing, and sexual advance may constitute a breech in the societally imposed norms of dating. It is through these changes at the microsocial level, however, that social institutions and macrosocial change are originated.

When a woman does a man's task by initiating a date, her action results in gender assessment. On the level of the interaction response may be positive (e.g. he accepts), but also might be negative (e.g. she is seen as desperate and bold). There may be positive and negative assessments at the structural level as well. One of the ways a woman may be able to fulfill this male task and still maintain her status as a member of the female sex category is to ask in a different way than a man, under different conditions, or use any strategy that will keep her display of gender from being doubted. Doing gender provides a useful way to conceptualize dating because of the element of situation. In nontraditional dating, violations of the normative expectations for women are a common occurrence. These women are, however, still considered women and are, according to the literature, overwhelmingly successful in acquiring the first dates that they seek (e.g. Lottes, 1993; Mongeau, et al., 1993). Subsequent dates initiated by the woman are, however, met with some resistance (Kelley et al., 1981). Through work in the expression of gender in dating, "people produce their relationship to one another, their relationship to the world, and those patterns normally referred to as social structure" (Fishman, 1978, p. 398). This study will use the concept of doing gender to understand how gender is perpetuated in the realm of dating.

History of Dating

The Courtship System

According to some experts there have been several changes in American mate selection processes since this nation's birth, not just the more commonly discussed transition from a courtship system to formal dating that occurred in the early 1900's. The first transition was from fairly autonomous mate selection in the colonial era to a more restrictive and formal system commonly referred to as courtship. The second and most widely known transition occurred with industrialization; a move from the courtship system to what will be called traditional dating. One of the cornerstones of modern dating, traditional or nontraditional, is that it occurs only in those places where mate selection is predominantly, if not completely, under the control of young people rather than parents. The shifts in locus of control helped to change the activities and expectations of dating partners. Evolutions in dating are continuing with current discussions of "getting together" or "hanging out" becoming possible replacements for dating.

The earliest method of mate selection employed in the United States is controversial. Some sources (e.g., Rice, 1993) suggest that parental control was very strong with only formal supervised visits permitted between the woman and her suitor. During this time, courtship revolved less

around the couple and more around the family. This was a more permissive system, however, than that employed in Europe at the same time, which focused on arranged marriages for the merger of capital, social status, prestige, etc. Supervised courtship in the US would continue until the early 20th century.

In another discussion of courtship (Rothman, 1984 cited in Cate and Lloyd, 1992), the importance of the participants in determining the nature of courtship was noted. From this account, the idea that mate selection in the colonial era was highly formal is somewhat inaccurate. Among those families of great wealth or strong European ties, courtship was likely formal, but among the majority of "average Americans", it was under the control of young people.

The nature of colonial life meant hard work, long hours, and little leisure (the opposites of which were later credited with the rise of modern dating). For young men the choice of a life mate was more closely tied to her ability to help out, run the household efficiently, and be a good wife, than to his love for her. This does not, however, suggest that love was lacking in these unions. It was expected to come after marriage, but it rarely formed their basis. According to Coontz (1988) the arrival of single persons in America, as well as nuclear families who had left behind kin in Europe, made a formal system unwieldy because there might be no one to perform introductions, act as

chaperon, etc. The frequently erotic messages of letters between couples demonstrate their openness about sexual and relationship issues (Benokraitis, 1993). In the 1770's the premarital conception rate was 30% (Rothman 1984, in Cate and Lloyd, 1992) suggesting that many couples spent private time together and were granted the opportunity to know each other well. Coontz (1988) concludes that the colonies were fairly open regarding sexual matters and there were few sanctions if the couple who conceived premaritally were soon wed.

Following the colonial era and through the 1800's, what is commonly considered formal courtship was the norm, particularly among the middle class. Rothman (1984, cited in Cate and Lloyd, 1992) credits the doctrine of "separate spheres" for the seriousness of courtship at this time. It was widely thought that men and women were completely different--in nature, spirituality, morality, temperament, etc. The "cult of domesticity" was instrumental in maintaining the belief in differences between men and women. The separation of males and females meant that their chances for interaction were lower, unlike in the colonial era when they worked side by side. This necessitated formal introductions of the couple by a third party who was acquainted with both of them.

Whereas compatibility and mutual respect had been important for marital partners in the colonial era, during

the 1800's it was increasingly expected that the romantic love component enter the relationship prior to marriage (Coontz, 1988). While emotional love, but not sexual expression of that love, was an essential element, the process of procuring a suitable spouse was quite formal. Murstein (1974) says that this was a reflection of a formal trend in society as well. For relationships this meant engagement announcements, formal exchanges of engagement tokens, and formalized wedding ceremonies (Rothman, 1984, cited in Cate and Lloyd, 1992). In addition, it was during the 1800's that the white wedding gown first appeared in a popular women's magazine (Special Reports, 1991).

The expected behaviors of young people followed this formality as well. As already noted, one had to be introduced; "pick ups" did not occur. The accepting of a young man's attentions was seen as serious because it was expected to ultimately lead to marriage. As a result, a female had to believe she liked the male, or could at least learn to like him, before accepting their first "date". Their "dates" centered around family and it is likely that the gentleman pled his case to the family as well as the woman. Parents played an important role in planning activities and encouraging the couple. From the sheer number of people involved, it goes without saying that intimacies were not permitted.

During this period of courtship, women had a great deal of power in mate selection processes. A woman had to give some indication that she was willing to have the man call on her before he would ask for permission. Mothers and daughters would make themselves available at social functions and would decide from which gentlemen calls would be accepted (Bailey, 1988). Many women announced the days on which they would be home to receive "visitors", both male and female, and a formal system for announcing one's presence, the use of calling cards, was followed closely. This system of offering permission to visit, both by the mother and the daughter, granted women a great deal of influence in mate selection. There was a lot of control of courtship by women partly because of the permission a woman could grant a suitor but also because of the location of courtship activities in the woman's sphere, home. The parlor and front porch were popular places for young couples to share food and conversation. They were sanctioned by the parents because they were not particularly private places and parents could usually remain inconspicuously nearby to monitor the couple's behavior and conversations (Bailey, 1988).

Once the couple was engaged, they were given considerably more privacy. It was during the engagement period, typically lasting two years, that couples began to get to know each other well (Benokraitis, 1993). While this

system of visiting and courtship was quite common for middle class young people, it presented problems for less wealthy families who did not have the extra room to allow a couple to get to know each other in semi-privacy. As a result, courting began to occur in public places. For young people who worked in cities this public courting became commonplace because it would have been scandalous for a young woman to entertain a man in her private quarters, whether dorm, apartment, or boarding house (Coontz, 1988).

Traditional Dating

Dating began about the time of World War I and by 1920, became the way to court. The reasons for the shift to dating from courtship are diverse with each seeming to explain different aspects of the transition. Accompanying increasing industrialization was increasing urbanization. People moved to the cities in large part because this was where the better jobs could be found. This urbanization brought young men and women in closer proximity because of residence and the likelihood that both would hold jobs. This propinquity expanded the field of eligibles for many young people. For the most part, these city jobs, mostly factory or skilled labor or service positions, compensated the workers well in terms of money and leisure time. The result of these better paying positions and limited work days was the opportunity to meet and spend time with potential partners. Also young

people now had money to spend on each other. The importance and frequency of dating on college campuses led Waller (1937) to talk about the rating and dating complex among college daters. Highly critical of dating behavior, this study focused on the notion that men who had money to date well were the most desirable as a date. For a woman, desirability as a date included being attractive, a good dancer, a good conversant, and perceived as being popular because she dated frequently. Following the conceptual approach of this paper, one could think of this as daters doing gender. Their expression of maleness and femaleness was prescribed by the society and to play the game of the dater, one had to successfully present the image.

Industrialization also took the locus of work from the home. For many women this provided an incentive to work outside the home at tasks they had formerly performed for no pay. It was quite common for immigrant and less affluent women to work before they married (Degler, 1980). This work away from home took women out of the direct control of their parents and enabled them to interact with a wide variety of individuals (Knox and Schacht, 1994). Women working, coupled with an increase in the women's equality movement in the 1920's, have been proposed as reasons for women's more brash behavior and greater acceptance of dates. Many of these women felt they should be equal to men in all aspects of life, including "politically, socially, and sexually," thus

representing a loosening of the acceptable behavior of women (Rice, 1993). Just as there were more women working, there were more women being educated. The advent of free access, public coed high schools also gave dating a push. Males and females had daily contact with each other and participated in activities together. Another intriguing possible reason for the emergence of dating is the creation of adolescence and the lengthening of childhood, giving young people an excuse to have fun and put off responsibility.

The new technology of the industrial revolution spawned the widespread availability of two key inventions for daters: the telephone and the automobile. The telephone was a way for a man to ask a woman on a date, have her accept, and arrange the details of the meeting. Certainly this would make a shy gentleman bolder and make asking a woman out less intimidating. The telephone could also allow couples an opportunity to communicate even when they might not be currently in the same locale or able to spend time together. In Waller's (1937) study of dating behavior the telephone was important because the woman might keep her caller waiting longer than necessary or wait to be paged several times before coming to the phone to receive the call, all in hopes of appearing more popular.

The importance of the automobile should not be understated. It provided a means of transportation to dating events (e.g., dances, movies, parties, etc.), thus enabling

the couple to vary their activities. They could travel farther away from home and participate in a wide variety of activities. One of the other key contributions of the car was that it afforded couples privacy for not only conversation but sexual intimacies. The car provided couples the opportunity to "spark", "spoon", "woo", "canoodle", or "firkytoodle", whatever their choice might be (Middleton, 1976).

While courtship was coming to resemble what we now call dating, a change was occurring in the roles that men and women were expected to play. While under the courtship system, women had a lot of control of the initiation, activities, and intimacies of getting to know a partner. This was due in large part to the place in which courting most often occurred, the woman's home. In the system of dating that emerged in the 1920's, the power and influence of women had declined in the arena of mate selection. A woman had to wait to be asked out by a man. She might give subtle hints of her interest but could never appear forward and seldom had anyone spreading the word that she was ready to receive callers (Bailey, 1988). Men became the dominant partners in a dating relationship because they had control over which women dated and which sat at home. In addition, dating now took place in the world of men, away from the home. Men were responsible for asking for the date, planning the activities for the date, paying any dating expenses, and

choosing the most popular partner that they could. An important resource for daters was money. In most scenarios men had more and consequently controlled what the couple did together. A man with money could date frequently and expect to have the "best dates" accept his invitations. This pattern of men's finances dictating dating behavior has been a prominent theme in dating. Bailey (1988) points to a 1960's advice column for young women that suggested if a woman knew her date was short of cash, she may offer to give him some money but that must be done privately and before the activity of the date so that he "appears" to be paying for everything.

When thinking of the dating couples in the first half of the twentieth century, characterizing their associations as the "dating game" may be useful. This analogy applies nicely to the gender roles and expressions that partners displayed as they attempted to achieve a desired outcome. Ehrmann (1964) in a discussion of sexuality and dating after World War I, indicates "the new-found freedom of male-female association became both the basis for boisterous and rollicking equalitarianism and an arena for the heightened battle of the sexes" (p. 594).

This battle Ehrmann refers to was based on a situation where the participating men and women wanted different things from the dates. Men desired sexual or erotic favors from their partners; women wanted marriage, social prestige,

or romance.This created tension and the likelihood of exploitation between the partners. The male wanted to get "as far as possible" before having to commit to marriage. The female wanted to grant as few sexual favors as possible to get her desired outcome, a marital promise. In this game, one partner wins at the expense of the other.

Whyte (1990) suggests that these different expectations for dating lead young people to put on false fronts so that current and potential dates will be impressed. The use of the term "dating game", then, highlights the series of strategical moves that a dater would employ to reach his or her desired outcome. This process found each individual "manufacturing artificiality in order to impress the date" (Whyte, 1990, p. 21). The structure of dating ensured that both male and female agendas were being debated. Men and women displayed the gender roles that would most likely assist them in achieving their desired outcomes.

While dating in the early 1900's through 1960's was fairly structured and followed traditional gender roles, more contemporary dating can be quite spontaneous, something that would be considered improper under the courtship system. Traditional dating was less formal than courtship in that there were no formal introductions necessary and no required progression of events to go through. Today's dating is even more informal than that.

It has been suggested that the focus of dating, as opposed to courtship, was quite different. Waller (1951) suggested that courtship had an end--marriage. The purpose of traditional courtship was to find a mate. Dating, on the other hand, was not always about mate selection, particularly for men. In his account it was conspicuous consumption. While Waller's view may have been cynical, it is true that the outcomes of dating and courtship may be different. For the young woman who accepts a call from a suitor, there is an implicit agreement that she will continue to see him in the future. In dating, especially in modern dating, it is "just a date" with no commitment past that one shared experience.

One of the largest differences between courtship and dating is the prohibition of intimacies in courtship, their acceptance in traditional dating (usually under certain conditions), and their expectancy in current dating. When considering a shift in sexual intimacy levels on dates, a look at changes in virginity at marriage is instructive. Examining three cohorts of women, those marrying in 1925-1944, those marrying in 1945-1964, and those marrying in 1965-1984, Whyte (1990) found large differences in virginity at marriage. The percentage of non-virgins at the time of marriage were 24%, 51%, and 72%, respectively, for these cohorts. For many women who were non-virgins at the time of marriage, particularly in the first two cohorts, their

sexual experiences had been with their betrothed and usually occurred only after becoming engaged. For the last cohort over 40% lost their virginity to someone other than the future marital partner.

Current Dating

Throughout this century dating has continued to evolve and change. During the 1950's dating was very traditional and "appropriate" gender roles were followed. Couples were, however, permitted privacy and "going steady" was an indicator of one's commitment. A popular activity was "cruising," again demonstrating the importance of the car for dating. In the 60's and 70's dating became less formal. Mixers and informal gatherings were common places to meet and mingle (Benokraitis, 1993). Based on earlier dating criteria, contemporary dating is very relaxed with few, if any, prohibitions. Either partner may ask and pay, and intimacies are permitted, if not expected. Dating occurs for a longer period in one's life now than in the past as people are waiting later to marry or choosing to remain single. In addition many daters are divorced or widowed and may bring new criteria, goals, norms, and expectations to the dating scene. Throughout this century a few trends have emerged in dating. Dating begins at younger ages today, 13, compared with 16 in 1920. People have progressively had more dating partners throughout this century, have gotten into "steady"

relationships sooner, and have experimented with sexual intercourse in dating relationships sooner (Whyte, 1990). It has been suggested that the focus of dating is moving away from marriage (Libby, 1976).

As a result of changing attitudes toward or perhaps visibility of dating, some family scholars have suggested that dating has been replaced by "getting together" (Libby, 1976). While this phenomenon likely provides participants with a variety of experiences that differ from traditional dating, dating remains an essential part of partner selection. I propose "getting together" is a stage in courtship, like has been suggested of cohabitation. This is the period in which one is not yet serious about finding a partner. This is "play time" or "oat sowing" time. With the trend toward postponing marriage, people may not be looking for commitments or "dating" relationships until they are ready to marry. I do not believe dating is being replaced, perhaps just postponed until a more appropriate or convenient time. It is also reasonable to expect that how people conduct dates has changed over time. The purpose of dating for a given individual is important to consider. Because dating has, since the turn of the century, been regarded as a way to find a mate, "getting together" might be intended just for fun, not mate searches. Finding out the meaning of getting together dating for the persons involved

(e.g., how they view their behavior) might be a useful place to start.

The history of courtship and dating in America is intriguing because of the central role it has played in our culture and the changes that have occurred. The importance of dating, as the recognized manner in which mates are chosen, has made it an intriguing topic for family researchers. As the trends in dating continue to change, particularly as a result of divorce and lengthening periods of singlehood, family sociologists have many intriguing questions to explore.

Current Dating Behaviors and Attitudes

Dating Scripts

The rules that govern the interactions of dating partners are socially scripted. That is, there is a set of guidelines determined by the culture that dictate the roles each partner is to play in the dating relationship. These scripts are thought to be particularly important early in relationships when couples rely on them as guides for appropriate behavior (Rose and Frieze, 1993). These heterosexual dating scripts are mediated by gender. Men and women are given different tasks, which each learns early and often through the repetition and sanction of socialization. Simon and Gagnon (1986) distinguish between cultural and interpersonal scripts; the former representative of a

hypothetical situation and the latter indicative of beliefs to which persons actually adhere. Research by Rose and Frieze (1989; 1993) describes the roles expected of and actually adhered to by men and women in a dating situation. Their results indicate that the attitudes of men and women continue to be rather traditional in regards to courtship and emphasize a strong degree of gender typing. DeLucia (1987) argued that the gender specific behaviors that occur on dates could be linked to gender role identity. Utilizing the Bem Sex Role Inventory, DeLucia determined that there was a significant relationship between gender role identity and gender-specific behavior, with the masculine men and the feminine women adhering most closely to stereotypical dating behaviors.

Like earlier researchers (e.g. McCormick and Jesser, 1983; McCabe and Collins, 1984) Rose and Frieze (1989) found that there were gender differences in scripted behaviors for a first date. Early dating seems to contain stricter gender scripts than those found for established couples. If that is the case, it would seem less likely that the scripts would be violated early in a dating relationship. The current study seeks to understand the situations where violations of these scripts might occur and the gender work that accompanies this.

The traditional male cultural script for a date could be considered proactive (Rose and Frieze, 1989). The actions

described for men were self-directed and included such actions as "asking for and planning the date, driving, initiating and paying for date activities, and initiating physical contact." Rose and Frieze (1989) indicated that the expected roles of women on a date, involved waiting to be asked, being concerned about looks and appearance, keeping the conversation flowing, and rejecting the physical advances of the partner, and are reactive roles. The researchers concluded that "male dominance and control of dating are expected by young adults on a first date" (Rose and Frieze, 1989). This study represented cultural scripts in dating.

In an effort to understand how closely daters' interpersonal scripts would adhere to the cultural scripts, Rose and Frieze (1993) asked 135 respondents to list the actions that men and women would do to prepare for a hypothetical first date and their actions while on the date. These same respondents were then asked to describe their most recent first date by telling what their role was in preparation and on the date. If 25% or more of the respondents mentioned a particular action, it was included in the script. There were some actions listed for both men and women. These included grooming before the date, interacting on the date, and saying good-bye. As in the cultural scripts, on an actual date women were playing more passive, reactive roles than men. Of the twenty actions that

defined a woman's script, six were directly part of the man's script or were initiated by him (e.g. picked up date). None of the men's fifteen actions were initiated by their partners. Overall this study confirmed the different roles of men and women in dating and the persistent influence of cultural scripts in socio-sexual behavior.

Female Date Initiation and Expense Sharing

Researchers have been concerned with the effects of women violating the cultural scripts and assuming a traditionally male task, initiating a dating relationship. Hypotheses have revolved around men's impressions of date initiation by women (Muehlenhard and Scardino, 1985), men's perceptions of greater sex willingness and risk of date rape when the woman initiates the date (Bostwick and DeLucia, 1992), changes in the length of dating experiences with a partner when the woman initiates (Mongeau et al., 1993), perceptions of sexuality and likability (Harnish et al., 1990), and anxiety differences between men and women when initiating dates (McNamara and Grossman, 1991). Each of these studies approached female date initiation from the standpoint of it being an unusual occurrence, one that would be expected to alter other aspects of the dating relationship.

Using a sample of 309 male undergraduates, Muehlenhard and Scardino (1985) manipulated female date initiation and

apparent intelligence of the woman through four videotaped representations of interactions between a male and female student. The results of this study indicated that females who initiate dates are seen as more sexually active, more casual daters, and are more flexible and agreeable than females who do not. The more intelligent woman was rated more likable, truthful, interesting, flexible, tactful and less sexually active or a casual dater than her non-intelligent counterpart. The woman who was perceived as intelligent and asked for a date was rated as most likable of all the women and the most feminist. This study suggests that men are not disturbed by women who initiate dates and may even find these women more likable. As the authors suggest, however, this may be due to the male's false perception that this woman wants to have sex with him. Harrington (USA Today, 1992) found that men liked women to initiate dates and hypothesized that this was because it took some of the pressure off them.

Likability and perceptions of sexual willingness informed a recent study about initial interactions. Harnish et al. (1990) focused on the impacts of gender and self-monitoring on perceptions of sexuality and likability. One hundred ninety unacquainted undergraduates were recruited to participate in mixed gender pairs. After a five minute discussion of their likes and dislikes about college life, participants completed questionnaires in private. These

included a self-monitoring scale and a list of qualities on which the discussion partner, as well as the respondent, were to be rated using a likert scale. The results of this study support the findings of Muehlenhard and Scardino (1985) in that "men perceived their female partners and themselves as more seductive, sexy, and promiscuous than women perceived their male partners or themselves." Men were also more likely than women to report that they were sexually attracted to the partner. While men felt mostly sexual attraction after the brief encounter, women reported they felt mostly friendship.

This tendency of men to interpret the actions of women in more sexual ways has been linked to studies of date rape. Women's dating behaviors may be interpreted by their partners as indicators of sexual willingness. For example, Muehlenhard, et al. (1985) found that a woman was perceived to be more interested in sex if she asked for the date and if she let the man pay for the expenses of the date. Building on this idea, Bostwick and DeLucia (1992) evaluated how men and women viewed the dating behaviors of asking and paying and how these were related to sexual willingness and date rape. Four hundred fifty-eight respondents were given scenarios that varied who asked and who paid in a dating situation. They were then to evaluate the degree to which the man and woman in each scenario wanted sex and how

justified the man in the scenario might be in committing date rape.

Results indicated that men consistently rated the sexual willingness of both males and females higher than did the women. Women who asked for dates were perceived by men and women as more willing to participate in intercourse than women who did not ask men out. However, when the woman asked and paid, perception of men's sexual willingness went down and "men in particular reported a greater decrease in male sexual willingness" (Bostwick and DeLucia, 1992). For none of the scenarios presented was rape reported to be justified. This may, however, be due to the awareness students have of the "right" answer regarding date rape. The researchers concluded that indeed female date initiation and paying behaviors were important. "Women may be perceived to be most sex willing when they pay for all the date expenses, moderately sex willing when the man pays, and least sex willing if each person in the couple pays his or her own expenses" (p. 22). If this conclusion is accurate, women should offer to pay their own dating expenses if they wish to avoid sexual intercourse.

In the most comprehensive study of female date initiation to date, Mongeau, et al. (1993) examined the proportion of persons who have been involved in a female initiated date, the length of female initiated relationships, the techniques used to initiate, and

evaluations of the female initiators. Four hundred forty-four male and female undergraduates participated in this study in two waves. The first wave (N=172) was asked about ever having experienced female initiated dating. The second wave (N=272) was asked about their experiences with a female initiated first date. This division is important because there are different issues when a woman initiates a date in the context of an ongoing relationship compared to initiation of a first date.

The data for female initiation were as follows. In wave one 84% of the women had initiated a date, 92% of the dates were accepted, but only 65% of the women asked the same man on a subsequent date. In wave two (first dates) 63% of the women had initiated, with 88% of the dates accepted. However, only 44% of the women reported asking the same man out again. A significant percentage of the women not asking the man out the second time had, however, gone out with him more than once. This could indicate a return to traditional gender roles where the man asks or a mutual agreement to see each other again. On average, female initiated relationships lasted 27.2 dates, but the median number of dates was 5. Forty-one percent of the respondents indicated the relationship ended by the third date, but 7.5% had dated more than 100 times.

Three factors were cited by Mongeau et al. (1993) as significant predictors of attitudes toward female initiation

of dating. Positive attitudes toward feminism were correlated with positive attitudes toward female date initiation. Males held more positive attitudes toward female initiation than females did. Those males who had accepted a female invitation were more positive in their assessment of female initiation of dating. Contrary to earlier studies (e.g. Muehlenhard and Scardino, 1985) Mongeau et al. (1993) did not find that the men in their study equated a direct female initiation of dating with a direct sexual invitation.

In a very recent study of dating (Lottes, 1993), date initiation rates for women were 74%. In addition 92% of women had shared dating expenses and 76% had paid all of the expenses for a date. When these data are contrasted with those of Korman (1980), it is clear that some changes have occurred in women's dating behavior over time. From this comparison one would conclude that women's dating behavior with regard to initiation and expense sharing has become more liberal over time. As the summarized studies suggest, attitudes and behaviors have become more liberal over time and the current study can anticipate similar results.

Female Sexual Initiation

Beyond female initiation of dates and expense sharing, there are other violations of the traditional dating scripts which may have a direct impact on the relationship. These studies focused on female sexual initiation. For most early

studies of female sexual initiation, "only atypical couples reported that the woman actively initiated initial lovemaking" (Macklin, 1983). More recent studies of female sexual initiation also indicate that men and women feel more comfortable with their traditional sexual roles, initiator and refuter respectively (Grauerholz and Serpe, 1985).

It has also been suggested that women may exert control over sexuality in covert ways (Perper and Weis, 1987). In a study of college students in 1985, Lottes reported that 34% of college females "very often" initiate sexual intimacy with men. There was, however, no distinction about the stage of the relationship; and female initiation rates for first intercourse with a new partner may be lower. In a 1993 study Lottes reported that 38% of college females said they had initiated the first sexual encounter with a new partner. This study, however, did not talk about how the initiation proceeded. Seventy-eight percent of females and 76% of males in the same study reported that both sexes should be equal initiators of sexual relations.

Factors that have been linked to women's initiations of sexual activity include relationship context, sexual satisfaction, and sexual experience (Lottes, 1993). Those women who are involved in a long-term serious relationship, feel sexually satisfied and loved, and have a fair amount of sexual experience are more likely to feel comfortable initiating sexual activity. The data of O'Sullivan and Byers

(1992) supported the presence of a steady dating relationship in the likelihood of sexual contact being initiated by the woman.

Just as studies of unwanted sexual advance by men against women have been presented, studies of unwanted female sexual advance on men are also being reported. Anderson and Aymami (1993) reported that 93% of the females in their study had initiated sexual contact with a partner but there was no control for length of relationship in this study. There were gender differences reported in the study, In all initiation situations men reported receiving more female initiation than women reported initiating.

Other studies exploring female sexual initiation focus on strategies and techniques women employ to convince their partners to participate in sexual relations. O'Sullivan and Byers (1993) reported that women had very little success in initiating sexual relations with a partner. In a study of 201 unmarried, heterosexual students, the researchers focused on female sexual initiation by type of influence and receptivity of the partner. Over half of the respondents reported having been in a situation during the prior year in which the female partner desired more sexual activity than the male. Most disagreements occurred in the context of steady dating relationships. Ninety-six percent of the participants who experienced a disagreement reported that the woman used a sexual influence strategy. These strategies

were classified as positive (e.g. used humor; danced or moved seductively), negative (e.g. cried; moved away from partner), or neutral (e.g. bargained; stopped sexual activity), with the positive strategies most often employed by women. The authors concluded that context was a critical consideration in the sexual encounter.

Christopher and Frandsen (1990) also considered influence strategies to engage in or limit sexual activity. After presenting a questionnaire to 411 undergraduates, they concluded that four categories of strategies were used: antisocial acts, emotional and physical closeness, logic and reason, and pressure and manipulation. The latter was found to be used more by men than women and by persons who wanted sex more. Emotional and physical closeness was found to be the most successful strategy but those who wanted sex less used logic and reason. The researchers caution that it is not known how the use of these strategies impacts relationship development or progression.

While female sexual initiation is still being explored, preliminary data indicate that this behavior is definitely a part of dating relationships. There is some discrepancy as to the frequency of female initiation but most data indicate the context of a relationship is an important variable. Consequently in the current study, one would anticipate fairly low sexual initiation rates for women because they are being asked about first and early dates with a partner.

At this point in a relationship the freedom to violate gender scripts in multiple ways is likely constrained, whereas in an established or steady relationship violations are not viewed as harshly or inappropriately.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

Sample

Twenty heterosexual couples who have never been married, have dated a relatively short time, and are not currently cohabiting or engaged were asked to participate in an interview regarding their dating behaviors and attitudes. At least one partner from each pair was a student enrolled in undergraduate courses at University of Florida during Fall 1995 or Spring 1996. These participants were asked to participate in two interviews, the first as a couple and the second individually.

The study involves couples who have dated a relatively short time. The determination of an arbitrary measure for "short time" is not necessary in a study of this type. Because the focus is on the production of gender among new relationship partners, their attitudes and actions, they should demonstrate consistent gender for new relationships regardless of where they draw the line between new and established relationships. Variation is expected, because just like the expression and awareness of gender, what one considers a lengthy or short relationship is a matter of perception. If all participants answer questions while they

are under the assumption that theirs is a relatively new relationship, then the conditions for data collection are adequate. The feminist goal of truth in research, to represent the voice of the participants as accurately as possible (Thompson, 1992), is reinforced when the participants set the standards for length of association. While failing to specify a particular time period for couple's associations may be interpreted as a lack of measurement precision, it is more valid to allow those persons involved in the relationship to use their own determinations of the length of relationship that qualifies as "relatively new." Thus an arbitrary time is not placed on the relationship.

The sample involves couples who do not have a lengthy association because the study focuses on gender in early date initiation and in the formation of the relationship rather than after a relationship has been established. As Mongeau and associates (1993) discovered, the behaviors of women may be different in regard to dating initiation if they are involved in a serious relationship with the dating partner. It is likely that the relationship provides a safety net so that violations of traditional gender roles are not seen in a negative way. There is more risk and accountability when there is no firmly established and negotiated relationship; violations of expected gender roles are more accountable in this context.

From the standpoint of doing gender, asking for dates is an activity not widely associated with the female sex category. Consequently, there may be adjustments in the asking that allow women to maintain their appropriate gender and fall within the acceptable bounds. Because women are accountable for their portrayal of gender, asking in an open, non-relationship context, has more risk. Additionally, women involved in a relationship over a sustained period of time would likely differ in degree of adherence to stereotypical gender role scripts and be more likely to adhere to an interpersonal script that was different from the cultural script, thus allowing women more freedom to do typically male activities (Rickard, 1989) and a justification for their unexpected gender expression (West and Zimmerman, 1991).

The sample was taken from students enrolled in undergraduate classes in sociology during the Fall 1995 or Spring 1996 semesters. Students enrolled in sociology courses were selected for ease of data collection and access. In addition, sociology courses are in high demand to satisfy many of the university general education requirements. The sample is not intended to be representative, but should provide a cross-section of student attitudes and behaviors. Students are also a population heavily involved in social, recreational activities and partner selection. Consequently, students

would be expected to have multiple opinions and ideas about partner selection to share with the researcher. The nature of a co-educational campus is such that women and men have lots of contact and daily interaction. They attend classes together, participate in social and professional activities, live in diverse housing, dine with opposite sex colleagues, etc., all making friendship and partner choice facets of daily life.

Data Collection

The study is composed of interviews with participants who are willing to discuss their feelings about dating in some detail. The interview method allows for fairly quick collection of data at a reasonable cost of both time and money. The quick response time with a personally administered interview allows for additional time to be spent in data analysis and still keeps the study on schedule. Interviews also permit the researcher to probe for detailed information that a more closed-ended questionnaire may miss.

Relatively unstructured interviews were selected as the methodology for this research question for epistemological reasons as well. Primarily, face to face interviews allow for more understanding of the respondent and a means to put the respondent's "voice" into the research conclusions (Thompson, 1992). Feminist researchers have touted the

interview as not only a useful feminist research method, but as a way to make sure all parties, interviewer and interviewee, have a place in the data collection and subsequent report. Participants not only present verbal data, but indicate through body language and other visual cues additional importance and meaning in their statements and interactions. Because the first interview is with both partners, this joint interview provides a unique opportunity to witness the couple in interaction, a situation that one might only get to witness by accompanying the partners on a date. In keeping with the "active interview" approach (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995), the researcher was aware of the impact of the respondents on the interview focus, selection, pace, content, etc. Therefore the "voices" of the respondents have become the primary data collected.

The interview format was chosen because it can give voice to the men and women involved in the dating relationships and doing the "work" of gender. Rubin (1990) uses this technique to allow her participants to "tell the story" of the sexual revolution. This is a narrative of personal experience applied to the process of social change. The current study seeks to use the narratives of dating partners to understand how men and women go about the primary work of any interaction, the production and sustenance of gender. Interviews not only provide the researcher data for analysis, and sometimes the analysis

itself (DeVault, 1990), but present an opportunity for the participants to clarify their own feelings, opinions, and beliefs about the research topic (Thompson, 1992).

The interview schedule for both interviews was developed by the researcher to illicit data to support or refute the theoretical position of "doing gender." The first interview (Appendix A) was with the couple together and focused on issues about the relationship, such as, length of association, how they met, how they "got together", what they typically do on a date, what they converse about, the conceptions of dating that they share, and the kind of gender roles that they expect from the partner.

The second part of the research involved the individual interviews (Appendix B). Because the interview is with the researcher and only one of the partners, these questions focus on the individual in the relationship. This portion of the study is much less structured than the initial interview and will provide the participants the opportunity to consider the role that they play in the relationship, the role the partner plays, how these roles developed, etc. This portion of the study revolves around how partners ask for dates, perceive the response, negotiate payment, initiate sexual contact, etc. In the separate interviews with the partners, the focus was on the roles, behaviors, and attitudes that a particular partner demonstrates. These participants were asked about what they do to attract the

partner, how they want the partner to see them, and if they believe their behavior is appropriate with regard to gender. The responses of the participants provide descriptive accounts of the their dating experiences and gender expression with the current partner. One of the main objectives is to determine how men and women view their position in the relationship and, more importantly, how they display gender to themselves, the partner, and the societal observers through the claims that they make and for which they are accountable.

Following a technique used by Blaisure and Allen (1995), the couples were interviewed together and individually. First partners were interviewed as a couple about their dating experiences and how decisions are made about their dating activities and behaviors. Each partner was then interviewed separately and asked about what they do specifically in the relationship with regard to the expression of gender. As permitted by the participants, all interviews were audio recorded and video recorded. The use of both recording devices provides a back-up in case of a technical malfunction. Additionally, the use of video recording is useful when watching couples interact. Not only does this provide a means to record the conversations and responses that the participant provides, but the researcher is better able to note the nonverbal negotiations and expressions of gender that are being displayed. The video

record presents a unique opportunity to capture physical movements and body language that would be overlooked and lost as data in an interview that was only recorded as an audio tape.

Recording the data as closely as possible was one of the researcher's primary goals. The importance of representing the exact words and meaning of the participant is crucial. For too long researchers have interpreted the meaning of what their respondents said, rather than letting the words and actions of the participants speak for themselves (Reinharz, 1992). In an attempt to better represent the voice of the respondents, a method that allows for accurate recording of the interview proceedings was necessary.

Data Analysis

It is important to recognize that because the interview is a method of research shared between all participants, including the interviewer and respondent, there is input from all sources, thus it is important to consider the presence of the interviewer. While primarily removed from the "data" the interviewer's presence may have an impact on the participants' display of gender. Once the participants are aware the interviewer is a woman, her gender may be an important variable. While on the surface this seems to make data analysis challenging, the presence of anyone, male or

female, would impact what happens and perhaps what the respondents say. The issue is to take the data at face value. If the partners say a certain thing, the researcher must trust that it is what the respondents mean. Therefore, in the analysis, the researcher points out the links between the interviews and the strategies being employed, but trusts the knowledge and experience of the respondents.

Data analysis proceeded by categorizing responses into themes. Often couples dealt with multiple themes in an interview and this was noted. Particular attention was paid to definitions that couples applied to relationship aspects such as date, first date, boyfriend or girlfriend, and commitment. Finally, the language and terminology that couples used to explain the status of their association was highlighted.

CHAPTER FOUR
INTERVIEW FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from video taped interviews conducted with currently dating couples. The data are from interviews conducted with the couple together and interviews with each partner individually. A total of 60 interviews, three for each couple, were transcribed and analyzed to provide insight into the production of gender in dating relationships. The main areas indicated by the research data are the production of gender in a relationship setting, the language couples use to categorize and theorize about their relationships, and one of the main outcomes of the interviews, the production of a believable relationship.

Doing Gender in the Dating Arena

Five areas have historically been gender prescribed in dating encounters and have suggested that males play a more active role than females. Date initiation, planning, providing transportation, and paying have been linked to the traditional male gender role. These areas were explored in the current research in the interviews with the partners together and individually. Sexual initiation also has gender expectations, with the male partner expected to be the

aggressor. The respondents were asked about this issue in their individual interviews to decrease any embarrassment and permit them to answer as honestly as possible about the sexual aspects of their relationship.

The dating couples in this study were well aware of the societal expectations of daters, but were quick to point out in many cases that they had a variation on the traditional expectation. The doing gender approach may help to account for the acceptability of doing something different. With the doing gender concept, West and Zimmerman (1991) argue that inappropriate or unexpected gender behaviors may be presented to make a point or influence interaction. Among the dating couples in the present study, the areas of nontraditional gender roles were most often linked to paying for and planning dating activities. The respondents cited various reasons for doing other than the expected in their relationships. Among them were the female partner having a higher income, the male being miserly, or the partners perceiving a shared arrangement as more equitable than when one partner was financially responsible. These claims may serve as justifications for the violation of traditional gender expectations for the couple and for the larger society.

Traditional Gender Roles

Traditional gender roles are easy for couples to follow; however, many couples follow only part of the gender prescriptions. They may see traditional roles as too limiting or old-fashioned, or simply may not find them acceptable. In the current study partners who focused on traditional and nontraditional gender divisions in dating provided justifications for their ideas often citing socialization and comfort level as their reasons for their particular behaviors. One important factor in couples portraying less traditional gender roles was the length of the relationship and whether they had known each other prior to a dating association.

When asked what she saw as the role of the woman on a date, 20 year old Dana said,

> I don't know. Probably I think I still have a very traditional opinion about it, like as being the one who is going to be more...the guy is taking the girl out. It's not like a date together. So, maybe that is because I have never been on that many official "dates" (uses her fingers to make quote symbols). So, I think I'd like it to be that sometimes, where it is just two people and the guy comes to pick up the girl, and go out to dinner or a movie...something like that.

While the literature might suggest an increasing number of women are asking men out on an initial date, the women in the current study revealed that asking is still very much a male activity. Some females provide suggestions that their male partners then act upon, but the risk in initiating a

planned date was carefully considered by the women. In keeping with the concept of doing gender, a woman must use a different asking strategy than a man because of different gender expectations. In this study that meant the woman often asked "as friends" or for a group activity rather than as a one-on-one traditional first date.

At the time of the interview, Rosie, 20, had been involved with Marco just less than one year. She considered him to be her first real relationship and felt that they had long term possibilities. Like many women, Rosie feels that knowing the partner as a friend before initiating a dating relationship is very important. Kim is the interviewer.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates?

Rosie: I don't...I think it would depend on the situation. If they were...if it were like a friend, then it wouldn't be anything because even if the other person, if the woman was interested in the man, she would at least have that friendship as a barrier. But, I don't know. I've never asked any guys that I have known on dates. I don't think it's wrong, but... I don't know. I guess I'm kind of traditional in that sense.

Kim: So you don't think you would ask someone out?

Rosie: Probably not, no. I would ask somebody to go out for coffee or something like that. I don't...I

guess that would be considered a date, but nothing too big.

The same question asked to Rosie's partner, Marco, 21, elicited a more upbeat response. Marco also helps Rosie maintain her gender display by talking about why she would never ask a man out.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates?

Marco: I think it's wonderful, and just shows a lot of confidence. It shows that they are not into the traditional...or old type of traditions where the man is the one who asks them out. I don't have a problem. She didn't ask me out this time, but before this relationship I had people that did. And I think it's great.

Kim: Would your partner ever ask a man out?

Marco: Never, never.

Kim: Why is that?

Marco: She's very reserved, quiet. She wouldn't even show it. She's the kind of person...it has taken me a long, long time to actually get to know her without, just by observing. I don't think so. Personally I don't think so. I may be wrong.

Hannah and Jesse, both 21, had been dating just over five months at the time of the interview. When they considered the issue of female date initiation, they demonstrated the differences between attitude and behavior

that characterize many relationship issues. The first segment is from Hannah's individual interview and the second is from Jesse's. Jesse recognizes how hard the gender violation is for Hannah, even though like most respondents he welcomes a woman's initiation.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates?

Hannah: I think that it is a good thing. I don't think I could ever do it, but anyone who can--I think they should go for it! (laughs) But it's just not something I could do.

Kim: Why not?

Hannah: Rejection. I don't like rejection at all. Just, I'm not a real forward person and it would just be totally uncharacteristic of me so...

Kim: How do you feel about women planning the dating activities?

Hannah: Oh, I think it's fine. Like I guess that kind of contradicts what I just said, but, like I don't have any problem once I'm in a relationship saying, "Why don't we do this on a certain night." So, I guess in a way that's asking him out, but I know he's usually not going to say, "No, I don't want to go out with you." He might say " I don't want to do that, let's do this", but that's fine. As far as I'm concerned, that's fine. And if the guy says, "You want to go out?", "Yeah, I guess.

Whatever you want to do", you know. But I just don't think I could ask someone out.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates? Has this ever happened to you?

Jesse: Yes, actually the first time it happened was when I was in high school. And it was, I don't know if it was because the way the girl was or if, maybe because I had some weird idea about it initially, it kind of--I remember when she asked me it was like "Well, okay", you know. "Well all righty, I guess you know what you want, right?" But I think it was just because she was a real strong personality. But now I don't have a problem with girls, and I think, for the most part now, girls are fairly forward, I think. A lot are and it doesn't bother me. They have every right to ask guys out, just as guys can ask them out.

Kim: Would your partner ever ask someone?

Jesse: No.

Kim: Why not?

Jesse: Probably because I had to make the first move, and just the way she acts around other people sometimes, like strangers and stuff. I, you know, observe her when she's around strangers. She gets quiet, I think a little bit at first. So as far as making initial moves, and striking up, I guess

even conversations. She's not against society, or something, but you know what I'm saying. I think she is more on the shy side than I am.

Planning is an area of dating that has traditional expectations as well. Cookie and Rocky, 22 and 20 respectively, had been dating approximately four months at the time of the interview. They preferred to say they were seeing each other, rather than dating, because their association was "real casual". In their joint interview they talked about how the bulk of their activities took place with their friends. As a consequence they rarely had to plan activities for the two of them alone. In the individual interview Cookie suggests that there are some positive aspects to adhering to traditional gender roles in dating.

Kim: How do you feel about women planning dating activities?

Cookie: I think it's fine.

Kim: Do you enjoy it more when he plans or when you plan?

Cookie: Usually I plan everything outside of the relationship with him, so it's kind of nice when he plans things because I don't have to make the decisions. I'm usually the decision maker with all my friends, so actually I like it when he does.

Kim: How do you feel about women driving?

Cookie: That's fine. I like it when he does. Again, same thing--I drive with all my other friends, but when I am with him, I like it. It is a good break.

Kim: Tell me how the issue of paying fits into your relationship.

Cookie: Well, it's, I don't know. It's kind of.. It's not one-sided, I guess. He paid in the beginning, he paid for a lot more I would say than...And I'm just not used to it, actually, because a lot of the guys that I have dated before just expect me to pay, for whatever. So it was kind of nice, but I don't mind paying for things.

In his three to four months of experiences with Tracy, 18, Rick, 20, had very definite ideas about the roles of women and men in the dating scenario.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates?

Rick: I think it's OK, cause a lot of girls ask me out. I feel flattered. It makes me feel good. I feel good. I think, I think they are making a wise choice.

Kim: How do you feel about women planning dating activities and driving?

Rick: I don't think they should do that, cause they're women. I'm not saying, I just think that men should have that kind of role to say something in that kind of decision there. Cause he's the

provider and he should, he should have the say-so in what goes on.

Kim: How do you feel about women paying?

Rick: Paying for stuff? I think that should be his. Because I buy something, I'm not saying if I buy something she should buy something for me, but I pay mostly, I pay 60, she pay 40, 55, 45, something like that, but I think the man should pay more than she does, but I guess she should pay something herself too.

His very traditional ideas were sometimes in contrast to his partner who had made the first move to establish a dating association, as she says, "because his fraternity brothers told [her] to" and had loaned him money to buy a car. Tracy longs for a traditional type of relationship where she is acknowledged as his partner and Rick wants to be free to play the field. Her discussion of how she wants her partner to see her gives a good indication of the kinds of differences this couple experiences in the dating arena.

Kim: Describe how you want to be seen by your partner.

Tracy: Basically that we go together, that we're boyfriend...if we do everything that boyfriend-girlfriends do, and all his friends think we go together and all my friends think we go together, we might as well say we are boyfriend and girlfriend. It's just the matter that I think he

just wants, at this point too since he doesn't want to be labeled as boyfriend and girlfriend, he'll get upset about things and say, "I'm not your boyfriend", but in every other aspect we go together. So I would like him to say we go together and mean it.

In the joint interview couples were asked about who generally drives and pays when they go on dates. There was a tendency for the couples to skip the driving part of the question, or dismiss it, and focus on the paying aspect. Things like who had a nicer car, who knew the way around town better, or simply who enjoyed driving more were often cited for why one partner was more likely to drive than the other.

When asked who usually drives and pays on their dates, Charles, 21, and Vanessa, 20, focused most of their attention on the issue of paying. These partners had known each other and been dating only a short time, two months, but shared the unique situation of residing in neighboring apartments where the roommates were all good friends and the two apartments participated in many activities together.

Kim: Who generally drives and pays when you are together?

Vanessa: Especially when we first started dating he paid a lot, like, you know, offered. And now...

Charles: And now cause...well what happened was I worked over the summer and I only had one class so I worked a lot so I had extra money. And of course in the beginning of a relationship, you know..

Vanessa: You know, you're trying to

Charles: Well I guess you're trying to do a little impressive thing with the money. So, I had money and I didn't mind spending it cause I was having a good time and I still do, you know. But I started running out of money because I started having to pay for lots of food because I wasn't home as much and so I started having to watch my money. And I drove a lot, she drove a couple of times like when we went out, if we went to a bar scene or something because I like to have a drink or two. I don't drive at all so she offered to drive for us. I guess the answer to your question I, maybe I do [pay more].

Vanessa: You do a little more than I do.

Regina, 19, and Owen, 22, had been dating for approximately 13 months when they participated in the study. When asked who usually drives and pays on their dates, they offered the following explanation.

Regina: At first I didn't have a car up here, so that pretty much took care of the car part.

Owen: The first semester I pretty much drove, but now we both have cars so it kind of varies.

Regina: Yeah, off and on. I mean, if my car's working or if it's parked too far away or something, then we'll just take his.

Owen: Whatever is more convenient. As far as paying...

Regina: I try and pay and he won't let me half the time.

Owen: And ah, you know, it's just a simple matter of like, right now, at this point, I have more money than she does. I mean, I worked down at IBM this summer and I'm about to graduate and I'm getting a real job, you know, in a couple of months. So engineers make way too much money, more than they deserve. So you know, I mean someday she's going to be a $100,000 paid violin teacher and--in her dreams--then she can support me. But for now, I pay. I pay for a lot of things, but she still pays now and then. But it's not like I, I like don't go, "You're the woman and I will always pay cause that's the way it is". So you know, sometimes we just go out to dinner and she'll be like, "Put your money away, I'm paying tonight."

For Veronica and Paul the issues of traditional versus nontraditional dates were a constant theme. In the joint and individual interviews they talked about how they worked out paying issues in a fairly traditional manner, offering

various justifications for their traditional and nontraditional attitudes. Veronica, an 18 year old freshman, had known Paul, a 22 year old senior, for three years. They had been close friends and decided to start dating eight months prior to the interview. Both come from financially stable, Catholic families. The first excerpt is from the interview with the couple together.

Kim: Who generally drives and pays when you go out?

Veronica: He does.

Paul: That would be me.

Kim:(to Paul) How do you feel about that?

Paul: I like it. I'm the only, I don't know if this has anything to do with it, I'm an only child and I was taught that's what you're supposed to do. At this point I think we've been dating and friends long enough that it's getting to the point where, I don't know if we have mutual funding of the relationship but I would say it's pretty much to the point where it's not as much of a big deal if she pays for something. Whereas in the beginning, you know, that would never have been the case. I don't think I would have felt comfortable letting her pay for something. And I know eight months isn't really long, but I think, you know, when you look at the length of the relationship, the friendship, I mean, it is.

Veronica: Yeah, it made it easy cause it could be one of those awkward transitions, but you already knew, I already knew so much about him that it wasn't a matter of my firing a bunch of questions.

Paul: But she does.

In the individual interviews, Paul again mentions that it is not comfortable for him to have a woman pay; he should be taking care of things like that. He is not uncomfortable with being asked out or driven by a woman, but paying is a big deal.

Kim: How do you feel about women paying?

Paul: Paying is something more. I'm not necessarily sure why. Our relationship especially has never been focused on money. I've never been in a relationship where I felt comfortable with the girl paying. I've never been in a friendship where I felt comfortable with the girl paying. If I went out to lunch with somebody who was my friend, I would never even fathom her paying, and if she did I would feel uncomfortable about it. Probably archaic but just the way..

Kim: Why uncomfortable?

Paul: Uncomfortable is a good way to put it. I just think that there are some things that, I don't want to sound incredibly chauvinistic here, but there are some things that a man is responsible

for. And I know that sounds just as chauvinistic as...but, and you now, not in the fact that I think I'm superior or any other, you know. I just think that she shouldn't, you know. I'm taking her on a date, I'm taking. That answer doesn't surprise me as much as I want it to, but...I couldn't tell you. I think it is just one of those things that was really drilled into me as a kid, and is one of those things that has stayed there and has gone unquestioned. So I know that's a really round about answer, but...

Veronica's interview follows. She seems to be establishing equality in their relationship for herself by noting that she gives financial input but not all of her financial contributions to the relationship are directly in the form of paying on dates.

Kim: How do you feel about women paying on dates?

Veronica: It's gotten different now. I mean, I remember in the beginning I used to feel bad and like maybe I should pay for more stuff and he'd be like "You're not paying." And now it's kind of like, I, he, he obviously does pay for more. I mean that's a given. But like if we'll go over and like grab lunch on campus and he doesn't have any money, I'll be like "I have money. I'm paying for it." Cause sometimes I feel, you know it's like I feel

bad because he's always paying. And like my dad sent up steaks. I have them in my freezer, and like we'll, you know, whenever, cause I don't know how to cook them, so I'm like "OK, let's have filet tonight." So I'll take out two. Or my dad or his parents will send up like gift certificates to Outback [Steakhouse], and you know that's just considered, guess where we're going tonight, you know. So that's how I think it's like mutual, but he does pay more.

Kim: And that's OK with you?

Veronica: Yeah, very traditional, I know that's probably horrible and just not at all like the 90's thing, but it's definitely a reason I'm glad I'm a girl.

Couples were asked about their sexual relationship in the individual interviews to decrease tension and the likelihood of embarrassment. If participants were asked questions about sexuality when they were in the joint interview, they may be embarrassed to answer them in front of a new partner.

Dana gives a good example of how to appear feminine and play the accepted female role, women must reserve their sexual appetites.

Kim: Tell me about your first sexual experience with this partner.

Dana: The first experience...it was weird. It was a little bit awkward. It was like...it wasn't that far along into the relationship and it was at my sister's house. And it was kind of shaky, but after that I think we got closer.

Kim: Who initiated the first sexual contact?

Dana: Kim.

Kim: How did he initiate?

Dana: I think he was the first one who brought it up to talk about, because we talk about everything before we do it. I think he probably brought it up. I'm sure it was on my mind, but I was keeping my mouth closed. (laughs)

All areas of gender specific behavior are likely influenced by the closeness of the couple and length of their association. It seems reasonable that the introduction of more egalitarian gender roles occurs after the couple is comfortable playing the traditional roles. In the case of dating and relationships, the paying issue has most clearly indicated the change from traditional to nontraditional gender roles. A woman's accepted levels of financial contribution increase the longer time she is in the relationship. In discussing the roles that paying takes in her relationship with Gregg, 22, Michelle, 22, suggests:

> I think women should pay some of the time. I mean I like it when, you know, men take me out, you know, treat me like that. But I think that's more of an in the beginning thing. Once you get into a

> serious relationship it just seems like that burden shouldn't, shouldn't all be on them. Besides, like it there's things I want to do, I don't want to have to depend, you know, if they can't afford something necessarily, I will end up paying and do that.

Suggestions like these may provide insight into how the established gender roles change.

The next section provides some examples of the way in which couples were negotiating their relationships, often after being together for a while, to do things in a way other than the gender prescribed means.

Negotiated Gender Roles

The traditional expectations provide a jumping off point for partners to illustrate how they are different from the expectations. They are able to then show their individual selves and the unique qualities of their relationships. The couples in this study often gave conflicting ideas about dating. In some areas there seemed to be few gender constraints. Driving wasn't an issue for any couple. As is often the case with changing social ideas, behavior and attitude are not evenly matched. Overwhelmingly the respondents supported the "idea" of interchangeable roles but many women in the study said they could not bring themselves to initiate dates and many men did not want to relinquish the paying responsibilities. Even within couples this division is important. While in their joint interview couples may talk about how they divide things equally, the

individual interviews showed some gender differences in attitude toward this. The interviews with the females were more likely to favor the ideas proposed in the couple interview. Many males held a more traditional opinion of dating and gender appropriate behaviors than did their partners.

Hazel, 19, had been dating Joe, 18, for seven months at the time of the interview. In her discussion of women's initiation activities, Hazel indicates that women may do more asking than they think, but it is less formal and more suggestive than the asking done by males in a dating situation.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates?

Hazel: I think there is no problem with that.

Kim: Have you done that?

Hazel: Not...I wouldn't say out on a date, but I've always been "let's go out", "let's do this." I guess that is another way of asking.

The doing gender approach would suggest that in order to maintain her female status it is necessary for Hazel to ask in a way that is different than her male counterparts.

Tracy asked her current partner out on their first date, but points out that she was pressured to do so by the fraternity brothers of her partner. After meeting her partner in the hallway during a fire drill, where he initiated their initial conversation and gave her his phone

number, she called him. She hints that if his friends had not suggested it, she may not have made the nontraditional gender move. Additionally, since he gave her his number, rather than her having to find it on her own, he may be giving her more permission to violate the expected gender role.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates? Is that what happened in your case?

Tracy: Well, yeah, I called him first, but that's, I called him because his frat brothers told me to. They were like "Yeah, yeah, don't be mean to our boy. Be nice to our brother." I was like "All right, I'll call," you know what I mean. It wasn't meant to like boost up his ego or anything. I don't know. It wasn't meant to be, to make me seem like, "Oh, I'm just too bored and desperate so let me call Rick." It's just his brothers told me to, so I thought, "well they want me to call their friend." So basically, I did. Women can, women can ask out men; it's no big deal.

Some women recognize positive consequences to planning dates, as well as initiating them. Susan, 19, and Jim, 22, had been dating for two months at the time of the interview. When asked, in the individual interview, how she felt about women planning dates Susan replied, "That's fine. I enjoy doing it myself and you kind of get to be more in control

that way, so that's nice." Jim agrees that women planning dating activities is a positive thing; couples enjoy the activities more if they both have input into what they are doing. He also enjoys women asking and suggests that his shyness gets in his way of picking up women.

> "Once I get into a relationship I'm not that shy and I'm not really that passive. When I'm going out and trying to meet girls, I can't do that, I can't hit on girls. I can't meet girls in clubs, so I would love it if someone would come up to me and ask me out."

For most of the respondents holding more negotiated gender roles, the males and females in the same relationship vary in the extent to which they feel women should have an active role in dating initiation, planning, and paying. One couple presented a fairly liberal statement about paying in the joint interview but the individual interviews both confirmed and denied this stance. Jack and Diane, both 19, had known each other for five years and had dated sporadically for the past three, although they said at the current time they were totally and very committed, respectively. Much of their discussion of dating was informed by the friendship status that characterized their relationship prior to dating. In their joint interview they contrasted new and established relationships with regard to gender roles.

Kim: What is a new dating relationship like?

Jack: Well, a relatively new...most of the time the guy goes, picks up the girl, takes her, buys her dinner, pays for the movie, or wherever they go.

Diane: It tends to form around gender roles. I think it's nice, but I don't agree with how I always feel a first date... I don't think the man should be playing a dominant role, and the woman should be just sitting there waiting. I mean it's nice and it's out of courtesy, but if I was in a new relationship, I wouldn't always expect it to happen, you know. The only thing I don't, I don't know, but in new relationships I think there are also feelings of uncomfortableness because they don't know each other and they don't know what they're really like. They only know the external aspect of the people.

Jack: And it's also harder to find...We never have trouble finding something to talk about because we know each other so well. And sometimes, if you don't know a person that well, you get stuck in these uncomfortable silences.

Diane: I feel that Jack is my best friend and he has been since tenth grade. For me, if I were going to have a relationship with someone else, it is really hard.

Kim: You said early in the relationship you have to play traditional roles, when do you no longer do that? Or do you always do that?

Jack: I don't think it's a certain point. I think it's just when a couple feels comfortable enough, they start getting serious. Where they can just, it really doesn't matter what they do or who pays, spending time with each other, that's all that matters, which is how it is now. So it doesn't, you know, have traditional roles.

Diane: I think, like regarding our relationship, I didn't always feel like, even if they [gender roles] did occur, I didn't really notice when we stopped it. I think just because we were friends before, we never really had to fall into that category of uncomfortableness or him doing this. When we first started dating, he did pay a little more, but it was never like I expected it. That role was never really there, you know. Maybe a little but not as much as it would be with a stranger. I guess that is an advantage of being friends with someone before.

When Diane and Jack were asked how they felt about women paying on dates, the following responses were elicited.

Diane: I feel it's fine. I do. I mean, I don't always have a lot of money, so I may ask Jack to borrow money, but I feel I should pay. I know a lot of my friends don't, they expect...I'm not really materialistic. I'm not trying to compare myself to my friends but, a lot of girls are very like, they expect their boyfriends to pay for them. There's not even like a question. Even if they say they don't want them to, in the back of their heads they really do. I don't expect that out of Jack. I think it's fine for women to pay and it should be equal.

Jack: It depends on the financial situations of both of the partners, but in general I think it should be the equal. That's the way it is in our relationship and the relationships that I've seen. Most are equal. Some of them the guys pay more, but...I tend to pay more. She doesn't really pay for me that much. But we'll go out, we split dinners, you know. I'll buy her a dinner, she'll buy me a dinner. Like on special occasions I'll buy her dinner, take her out or something.

Kim: Are there any instances when you feel she should not pay?

Jack: I don't usually like for her to pay, usually. I don't really let her, but that's just how I am. I

mean, I see some of my friends who go out and their girlfriends will pay for them sometimes, you know. But if she wants to split, she likes doing that, that's fine. But I usually don't like her to pay.

Kim: Why do you think that is?

Jack: I don't know. I just...I don't mind paying for her. I guess society, the norms have influenced me, but it just seems more appropriate for a guy to pay. Even though we have gotten way past that, I just feel comfortable paying for her. But when she pays for me I don't feel as comfortable sometimes, so I would rather [pay].

Matthew, 19, and Marta, 17, had been dating for just a few weeks at the time of the interview. Like Jack and Diane, they demonstrate gender differences when it comes to the expected roles of partners in the dating scene. Both partners deal with the issues of paying in the relationship. Matthew indicates that he is comfortable with nearly all aspects of women's nontraditional dating behaviors but is uncertain of his feelings on paying.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates?

Matthew: I suppose I'm comfortable with it. I mean, she asked me on a date, but I didn't even think "wow, she asked me out instead of vice versa." I'm comfortable with it either way.

Kim: How do you feel about women planning dating activities?

Matthew: That's OK.

Kim: And how about paying?

Matthew: Well, I'm comfortable with that to a point. She insists on picking up tabs sometimes that, you know, I would rather split even. She'll say, "Oh, you know, I got this one. Don't worry about it." And I'll be sort of like, "well, I have money." I guess I'm comfortable with that too.

While Matthew is more liberal in his attitude toward women paying than other study respondents, he is less liberal than his partner in determining when it is appropriate for a woman to pay. In the individual interview Marta indicated that she paid a lot of the time because neither one of them had much money to spend on the other. While paying is not an issue for her, the initiation of a date is.

Kim: How do you feel about women asking men on dates?

Marta: Well, I guess it depends on that person because with me, I mean, it kind of in someways is a big deal and in a way it's not. I mean, if I've never gone on a date with him before I'd feel really awkward about asking him, but if it is somebody that I felt like, you know, that I'd hung out with

before, and I'd known them a little while, then I'd feel more comfortable about asking them.

Kim: How do you feel about women planning dating activities?

Marta: Oh, that's fine. It doesn't matter, either way. I think both of us should talk about it. I mean usually, he's just like "well, whatever you want to do" and I'm like, "what do you want to do?"

Kim: And paying?

Marta: Actually, we take turns. I mean, I think that's fair. I don't expect him to always pay just because I know he doesn't have a lot of money. And he doesn't expect me to always pay because he knows I don't have alot of money either.

When talking about their first sexual experience together, Alex and Becky, both 21, focused on two issues. One issue was her unsuccessful attempt to initiate their first intercourse. Both mentioned this in the individual interviews. A second issue was the attempts of the couple to construct their decision to proceed and their later sexual experiences as joint decisions.

Kim: Tell me about your first sexual experience with her.

Alex: She wasn't my first, but I was her first and the interesting thing is she wanted to [have sex] at one point. I guess it was like three or four

months into the relationship, and I didn't want to because I wanted her to...I wanted to make it right for her. I wanted her to...I didn't want her to do it because she was curious like, "OK, well, I love this guy now and I'll just let it go." I wanted it to be right, to make her really be sure because I don't want her a week later saying "I shouldn't have. I should have waited longer." So the first time, I said no to her, which is unusual for any guy. But then the next time, we just...it was not a special date. You know, it was nothing like that. We didn't make it a very romantic evening. I mean, we went out to dinner, we spent the time like we usually do, and when she said she wanted to, I'm like, "are you sure?" And it was very sensit...sensitively...what's the word? We did it very slowly just to make sure it was right, to make it nice. That was it.

Becky recalled the experience similarly.

Kim: Tell me about your first sexual experience with him.

Becky: My first sexual experience, well my actual, where we actually had intercourse was probably five months, four months into the relationship. Four or five months. And before that I knew that I really, really loved him. So one night I tried to initiate

> it, and he was like, "no, no. I want it to be right. I want it to be special. This isn't how it should be done." And he wanted to make it, like, so it would be really special, and whatnot. But then I guess sometimes you just become overwhelmed with passion, so it just ended up happening. But he was very good. He was like "Are you sure you want to do this? Are you sure you want to do this? Are you sure you are going to be okay with this? Is this really what you want?" I was like "yeah, yeah, I know." And I knew it was what I wanted, probably because I had waited so long, you know what you want. You know what I'm saying? And so I knew that I just loved him to death. It was very nice. He was very...the most sensitive thing.

The idea that the behaviors and subsequent interpretations of them changed throughout the association of the couple is an important one. This suggests that the establishment of an expected way to interact leads to more freedom to negotiate different gender roles. It may be comfort, security, or less clearly defined cultural expectations for established couples, but changing gender expressions seem to be an important part of establishing a dating relationship. This issue will be addressed again in a later section.

In a discussion of the role of a woman on a date, Sebastian, 18, indicates that he is aware of the cultural ideas about dating, even if he chooses not to adhere to them strictly. He is at work changing his ideas, and possibly his partner's, with regard to dating behaviors.

Kim: What do you see as the role of a woman on a date?

Sebastian: The role of a woman? I think the role of the woman is just to be a companion to the man, just like the role of the man is to be a companion to the woman. I really don't think it differs at all. I don't think, in a dating situation, you can really look at gender. I think it is a companionship between friends. Because, I mean, you don't always date the other gender. I do, but...you know how things are. If that's your cup of tea, then more power to you. I think there is no real role. I think that there are roles you can try to fill, that you know are out there, but I don't have a specific role for a woman.

As the divisions between negotiated and traditional gender roles highlighted above indicate, respondents oriented themselves to dating in multiple ways, often within the same interview. They either saw themselves in a traditional light and focused on the traditional aspects of their presentation, expectations, and relationship, or they focused on how they were different than traditional daters.

In other words, they oriented to the traditional ideas of dating by proclaiming their opposition to them. This contrast helps to illustrate the role of the macro-level societal expectations about dating in shaping the micro-level perceptions of individual couples and daters. One must know the dominant paradigm to either adhere to it or reject it. The variations in acceptable behaviors in dating today provide challenges for daters because a dominant paradigm is not clear. Consequently, daters doing traditional and nontraditional things were quick to provide the researcher with justifications for their behaviors and decisions.

The data suggest that the macro-sociological orientation that defines dating is present and individuals must decide whether to accept or reject that in the context with a partner. Micro-level changes can become easily shared within peer groups and across relationships, thus changing, reinterpreting, or enhancing the macro-level socio-cultural expectations. Due to these various sources of dating models, many daters struggle with adequate definitions for their behaviors and the status of their couplehood when they compare it to traditional expectations. Dating is being defined and discussed in a variety of ways among the couples in this study. The analysis now turns to the language of dating to provide more images of gender and relationships.

The Definitions and Language of Dating

Do you call it dating or do you call it something else? In other words, how do you talk about the activities that you share? When is an activity a date as opposed to just a shared experience? The couples in this study had many theories, some overt and others implied, about what constitutes a date. They also distinguished between terms like dating, having a relationship, seeing someone, et cetera, to specify the expectations that accompany each. Dating seems to be as confusing for the participants as for observers who often find it difficult to decipher the status of a couple's interactions.

In the course of discussing the initial encounters between couples and questions about their first dates with their current partners, the definitions of dating that the partners rely on became evident. For most couples the definitions developed by deciding what constituted their first "real" date or what was simply an event in which they jointly participated.

Matthew and Marta met at a party hosted by a mutual friend. A month later Matthew hosted a party and Marta attended with some of her friends. That second party is the time from which they mark their association as a couple. This background information prompted the following exchange.

Kim: Would you consider the [second] party to be your first date?

Marta: no

Matthew: no. (to Marta) What was?

Marta: I think going to the Hippodrome.

Matthew: Was it?

Marta: Yeah, I mean we were...

Matthew: Didn't we do something the next day [after the party]?

Marta: Yeah, we did, but not like a dating situation. That was more like a day thing with people there, you know.

Matthew: Oh, yeah. That's [the Hippodrome] more of a normal definition of a date. We went to the Hippodrome and saw a play and we both had a nice time. (to Marta) Right? (She nods.)

Kim: Who initiated the date?

Marta: Oh, me cause I asked him if he wanted to go. I'm like, I take theater and stuff and you get extra credit for buying the ticket thing and I had it so I thought, well, I should go see a play.

Kim: How did you ask?

Matthew: It was just sort of a casual...

Marta: Yeah, just a casual thing like "Do you want to go to the Hippodrome?" It wasn't like I was nervous about it or anything.

Kim: So you asked him as friends?

Matthew: Well, at that point...

Marta: We were dating, but

Matthew: We were dating but we hadn't dated yet

Marta: Like I was...

Matthew: No, I mean...No it's not how it sounds.

Marta: Like we had done stuff, but not like anything that was like a formal date.

Matthew: Right. Like we had watched a movie and like went over to her dorm room.

Marta: But that wasn't really like, like going out on a date, date.

Michael and Catherine, both 20, were dating nearly four months at the time of the interview. They met when she was visiting a friend during a fraternity party. Michael had locked himself out of his room and went to his friend's room where Catherine was visiting to wait for someone to come unlock his door. Following initial introductions, all persons present went out to get some food. In their joint interview they discussed when they had their first date.

Kim: Who initiated your first date?

Michael: I guess I did. I asked her out to dinner and a movie...and Walmart.

Kim: Was that the same day you met?

Michael: No, it was a...

Catherine:a week later.

Kim: (to Michael) Did you ask her in person?

Catherine: No, well, we went to dinner before we went on a date. We went to dinner and we just...

Michael: as friends

Catherine: as friends. It wasn't a date really. And then, like a week later we went to dinner...and a movie.

Kim: What was it that makes one a date and not the other?

Catherine: (to Michael) You wanted...Well, we were rollerblading that day and he says, "Oh, do you want to get a bite to eat afterwards?" And I said, "Okay."

Michael: It wasn't that formal so...the next time was formal.

Regina and Owen, dating a year and one month, relayed a "date" story that is jointly constructed through their negotiation and shared responsibility for the narrative. Once a partner decides an event constituted a date and shares that, it is easy for both to find the elements in that experience that constitute or refute the concept of a date.

Kim: What was your first date?

(They are laughing and trying to decide)

Owen: (to Regina) When we went to Steak n Shake? Would that be the...

Regina: (interrupting) naw. (to Kim) He stole me a pepper shaker.

They continue to relay the story, each inserting key details, about how he stole her a pepper shaker from the restaurant on the night they met. After they told the story they focused on dating.

Owen: I guess that was really the first [date].

Regina: Well...

Owen: Oh, well, the first date really was like the next day. She just came over and watched Saturday Night Live with me.

Regina: Yeah, so that's probably the first actual planned thing for us.

Owen: like by ourselves.

Regina: Right.

Owen: We just sat on my couch and watched Saturday Night Live.

As the quotes from the three couples above indicate, dating still has a formal quality to it that just hanging out with a group of friends does not. It is an activity, rather than just being together. There are many divisions now in what used to be described as dating. The language dating partners use to talk about their associations may provide insight into their expectations and exclusivity.

Language may assist couples in establishing the status of their relationship. For some couples "serious" terms are not appropriate. They may not have been dating long enough to view the relationship in that way or they may prefer to

focus on other aspects of dating such as fun and sexual experiences. Tracy and Rick use different terms, but they both imply that a sexual component is part of their somewhat casual association.

Kim: How long have you known each other?

Tracy: About three months.

Kim: And you've been dating that whole time?

Rick: Yeah.

Kim: Do you call it dating?

Rick: Um, we're intimate friends.

Kim: Is that the language that you use when you talk to your friends?

Rick: Yeah.

Tracy: I just say "we're talking".

Kim: "We're talking." What does that mean basically?

Tracy: That we're...

Rick: (interrupting) we don't actually go together,

Tracy: Yeah.

Rick: But we do the things that people who go together do. We stay together, we spend time together, we go out together, stuff like that.

Like Rick and Tracy, Cookie and Rocky focus on the casual nature of their association. They recognize that they do have some ties to each other, but they use language that suggests there is not much commitment.

Kim: Do you say that you are dating or do you say something else?

Cookie: Seeing each other.

Rocky: Yeah

Kim: How would you introduce each other?

Rocky: I would probably say, "This is my friend, Cookie."

Cookie: Yeah, same thing.

Rocky: 'Cause it's not...

Cookie: It's real casual.

Rocky: So far.

In the individual interview, Cookie highlights some terms that she uses to establish the nature of the relationship when she says, "Well, dating is kind of a casual term I guess. I would consider it that you are more intimate than you are with just friends, but working your way toward a more serious relationship." She goes on to suggest multiple terms may be used for the same dating status.

> "Well, I think 'seeing each other' and 'dating' are ...well, I guess they are kind of the same. Going out with someone, I think that is a little more serious. Or, if you are 'having a relationship'--you're boyfriend-girlfriend, you know."

Cookie and Rocky's use of "friends" is contrasted with the use of the term "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" among couples who consider themselves to have a high commitment to the partner or the relationship. The terms provide a different way to describe the relationship between the

partners and there are differing expectations that accompany the terms. Talking about the status of the relationship was mentioned by many couples as the way to know if the status was casual dating or a relationship. When Cookie was asked when it is appropriate to use the language of boyfriend-girlfriend, her response pointed to time and negotiation. "I guess [after] spending more time with him. And just both of us maybe talking about it [and asking] are we in the boyfriend-girlfriend status yet, or what."

Hannah and Jesse pointed toward some of the connotations of using the language of girlfriend and boyfriend. In their conception it marks the emergence of the relationship rather than a casual association.

Kim: Do you call it dating or something else?

Jesse: Like initially, like I didn't...I'm like scared of the word "girlfriend" or dating, yeah.

Hannah: Yeah, I never knew what I was considered. His girlfriend?

Jesse: But I guess now, I guess I have no problem with like "girlfriend-boyfriend". I don't like "dating". "Dating" seems like you're still in the initial stage though. And I, like six months is really long. She (Hannah) said like a "short term". I thought this was, six months, fairly long. At least...

Hannah: It depends on your frame of reference.

Jesse: I had like a year long relationship before and that was like the longest. So I mean this is fairly long for me so, I think dating is kind of an understatement at this point.

Hannah: I don't really think of me "dating" him anymore either. I view it more as a relationship. It's beyond dating.

Kim: When did it get to the point where you thought of it as a relationship?

Hannah: It happened really fast.

Jesse: Yeah. We just like...that's what I'm saying. Like we...it was love at first sight. I found her attractive but, we just kind of like...as soon as we like got together, like that first day, we just kind of acted like friends, like friends forever, you know. We got along so well. And it was just kind of like we fit, I guess, so...

Hannah: It was at least, it wasn't more than a month I'd say. I really don't even remember. It just kind of happened. I don't, really always, I never knew whether he like, if people asked, if he said I was his girlfriend. But then I realized that he did and that was like a big thing for me.

Kim: How long was it until he used the term?

Hannah: Like two months.

Jesse: Yeah, like two months, I guess.

Even among couples who seem quite comfortable using the language of boyfriend and girlfriend, the definitions that they apply to the terms may have some discrepancies. In the following except Alex and Becky reveal their definitions of dating and their different uses of the terms "boyfriend" and "girlfriend."

Kim: How long have you been dating?

Alex: Ten and a half months. Probably two weeks, as soon as we got back to school, we started our relationship. We didn't really, it didn't become serious until a month into the dating. Then we both cut off all our other ties with people and that is when we became exclusive.

Kim: So what would be your definition of serious?

Alex: I think, I have my own little method.

Becky: He has a theory on this.

Alex: I think when you start out dating, it is "dating." And that involves, you and her could be going out and you can be going out with other people too...When you start "seeing" each other, you are headed toward a more serious commitment, but it's not serious yet. You are starting to block, like let out, the other ties, but you are still keeping them...And when you really feel you are getting close to this person, and you don't want to be with anyone else, that is when I would consider it

the "girlfriend-boyfriend" stage. That's my hierarchy. Go ahead (to Becky), what's yours? Hers is just you are either with someone or without.

Becky: That's OK.

Kim: Do you talk about your relationship as dating or something else?

Alex: No, we are boyfriend and girlfriend. We are serious. We are not seeing anybody else. (Becky nods.)

The difficulty that couples experience in defining and negotiating their status with the partner is considerable. In the arena of dating the language is often contradictory or inadequate to express the type of relationship or emotional attachment that the couple experiences. Conflicting use of the same terms, as demonstrated in the following two quotes, ensures that at the present time there is the likely situation that one's comments will be misunderstood by someone. Perhaps the partner, parents, peer group, or other potential dates will misinterpret the nature of the relationship. A commonly used and understood language may make discussions about dating practices more precise, but it would definitely take away some of the work of constructing a joint definition that couples achieve.

For Charles and Vanessa, who live in the same apartment complex and participate in many dating activities with a very close friendship group, dating is a very casual

association that has little claim to commitment or permanence on the part of either partner.

Kim: Do you call it dating or something else?

Vanessa: Dating. I do.

Charles: Yeah, I just say dating too.

Kim: Do people understand what you mean?

Vanessa: I think most people do.

Charles: A lot of my friends don't. Well, I've always been...we both just got out of real serious relationships and so they, my friends, have always seen me in a relationship, a steady relationship, you know. And I say we're just dating, you know, and they find that hard to believe. One of my roommates goes, "Well, you're not dating anybody else." And I'm like, "Yeah, but you can still date this one person. You don't have to be like dating."

For Dana and Ben, dating 7 months, the language used to describe their relationship is still dating, but the connotation of the term is more serious. Dating is used in conjunction with the boyfriend-girlfriend status.

Kim: Do you call it dating or something else?

Ben: I don't know. I've never really paid that much attention to how I talked about it.

Dana: I mean I call him my boyfriend, but even that is weird for me because I haven't dated a lot. But I

don't think I started calling him that until like two months ago.

Ben: Yeah, about that.

Kim: (to Ben) How do you introduce her to people that she doesn't know?

Ben: As my girlfriend. As Dana.

Kim: When you were describing how you met you used the term "seeing" each other.

Dana: It seems like...it seems like a lighter sense of the word. I would consider the first month like seeing each other. Since then, I guess dating. It just sounds funny, old fashioned, to say dating. It is really not talked about a lot. It is just...it's kind of, it's almost as a given now. Maybe call it a 90's thing, but if you talk about it a lot and you are using strong terms, like dating and seeing, a lot of people are uncomfortable with it because they are scared of commitment nowadays. They are like...oh, they get skittish about it. But that's just...there really isn't the terminology. It's almost dropped. It's just becoming a given.

Since it seems unlikely that society will develop a language for dating that all couples will understand and utilize equally, the work of creating a discourse of dating falls squarely on the shoulders of the participants.

Partners must decide the language that they will use with each other, as well as outside observers. The constructing of this shared image of the social arena of dating, the roles of the partners, and the nature of their association is among the primary work that those persons who consider themselves to be dating are engaged in. This production of the relationship or doing relationship was a key issue for the partners in the current study.

Doing Relationship

At first it seems quite reasonable to examine only the production of gender in dating couples, but the researcher soon realizes that her presence and the context of the gender discussion, a relationship, provide additional considerations. The production and maintenance of gender is not only for the benefit of the partners, but also for the benefit of the interviewer. Likewise, the maintenance of relationship as a defining characteristic of the association between the partners is also displayed for the researcher. In the initial call for participants, couples in a dating relationship were asked to volunteer. In the interview, it is necessary to convince the interviewer that you actually have a relationship with the person that accompanied you to the interview. This "doing relationship" comprises much of the work of the interview. In the analysis of the data, it is clear that the participants were conveying that 1) they

were male and female respectively; 2) they were "doing relationship"; and 3) they knew what they were doing with regards to relationship.

Once partners define themselves as a couple, that may become their organizing strategy. If they view themselves as a couple or a stable pair, they feel less pressure to adhere to normative gender prescriptions for dating couples, those persons without an established pattern of interacting with each other. This allows couples to leave the socially comfortable arena of the gender prescribed behaviors for early daters. There is less risk of accountability now because the relationship provides a buffer between one's portrayal of gender and social criticisms. The partner may be less likely to perceive nontraditional gender in a negative way when a relationship context defines the situation. For example, many couples noted that early in the relationship the male partner was more likely to pay for dating activities than the female partner. It was also suggested, even by women who felt they were too embarrassed to ask a man out for a first date, that women were very likely to initiate and plan activities with their partners once they had defined their association as a relationship and the terms boyfriend and girlfriend were being used.

Comparing the current relationship to former ones is also a way to establish a sense of couplehood or an established relationship. It was quite easy for couples to

compare what constituted old and new dating relationships when they used past experiences for comparison. Partners suggested that the behaviors that were appropriate differed by the length of time the partners had been involved as well as the intensity of the feelings they held for each other.

When Alex was asked about how many people he had ever dated, the following exchange occurred.

Alex: A lot. I'd say, and this is not an exaggerated number, I'd say anywhere from 70 to 100 different girls.

Kim: Have any of those been serious?

Alex: Well, I've has a few serious relationships, maybe four serious relationships. And even a couple of those weren't too serious because I didn't realize...you know, now that I am with Becky, I can really see what a serious relationship is. This is the longest relationship I have ever been in. But I'd say two super-serious relationships and two semi-serious relationships.

Kim: How committed would you say you are to your current partner?

Alex: Very as far as I wouldn't cheat on her. I wouldn't go out with another girl. I have a lot of...I have a tendency to flirt a little bit but it is harmless. I don't ask girls out. They all know I have a girlfriend. I always mention Becky when I

am speaking to a girl who might even be interested herself. So as far as I'm concerned I'm with Becky and I am with no one else.

This distinction in behaviors and experiences can even occur within one relationship. For example, Rosie and Marco discussed differences with their current relationship and prior ones, as well as changes within their relationship that helped them establish themselves more as a couple. When describing how they came to have their first date, Rosie and Marco talked about how they added relationship components to their association. Marco began by relaying a story about how he had returned from Puerto Rico over the Christmas break and visited the doctor because he was feeling quite ill. Rosie's mother was the doctor he visited and she sent Marco to her house for Rosie to tend to.

Marco: Because I was by myself I was really doing poorly with my health. And it was just so nice, her mom. I couldn't believe that she actually sent...she drew me a map and I went to her house. It was so nice. I felt healthy for the hour and a half I was there. I was like, this is something I really need to look into because...it's amazing.

Kim: So that prompted you to ask Rosie out?

Marco: Yeah. Well, she said, "call me whenever you can, whenever you want." And then three days later I did. I remember when we started talking to each

other it's like "I don't want to..." I spent every other minute saying "I'm going to let you go. I don't want to bother you. I don't want to bother you." (Pretending to be her) "You aren't bothering me, so stop it." From then on we just started talking. The thing about it is, even though we really didn't know each other, from like our second date we went into the deepest kind of conversations, and we went straight at it. So we always had a really good communication line, even though we didn't know each other for that long. We really opened up with each other.

Kim: What was the first activity you shared together?

Rosie: Just together? (to Marco) The beach? (he nods) We took a trip to the beach. We talked a lot.

Kim: Do you remember what kinds of things you talked about?

Marco: Yes. She had to stop the car and pretend that she was hungry or something because...

Rosie: I stopped because I thought you were hungry.

Marco: No, it was...she asked me the night before if I was doing anything and if...she wanted to go pick up her friend and she didn't want to go by herself. And she said "Do you mind going with me?" And I went

Rosie: We hadn't...We weren't... we weren't a couple yet when we did this and so I think he started talking about how he wanted to focus his energy on one person versus a whole group, because he was very involved in group activities. So he said that...and I assumed it was like an indirect...towards me so I pulled over and said "Let's stop over here for a minute."

Marco: After that we both kind of knew we were interested. At least I made it clear I was interested in one person, I know, because it was very uncomfortable. It was one of the first times since we had been together, even as friends, we were very uncomfortable around each other.

Kim: What made it a relationship?

Rosie: We were at a restaurant real late at night with some friends and I think, I don't know, I think it was during the meal that we were sitting next to each other.

Marco: We were at the end of the table.

Rosie: And he took my hand. We held hands for the rest of the meal. I guess from that point we both considered it like a real, a real relationship.

Above Rosie talked about an incident within the relationship that helped to establish the association between herself and Marco. In the excerpt that follows Rosie

separates her relationship with Marco from her associations with former partners.

Kim: How committed would you say you are to your current partner?

Rosie: Very committed.

Kim: And what does that mean?

Rosie: It means that when I feel that it's hopeless, I work, or we work, to get things back on track. So I think I try, and he does too, to maintain what we have and make it better.

Kim: Earlier you described this as a real relationship, what do you mean?

Rosie: When I compare this relationship to past relationships it seems that this one is a lot more fulfilling. The other one...the other ones were, I guess, just curiosity and trying to find things about myself, trying to find things about other people. This one is more like give and take. We don't...I don't feel that one person has more power, in any sense, than the other.

Kim: Have you two talked about the future?

Rosie: Yeah. He's made a lot of sacrifices in order to stay with me a little longer. He could have graduated this summer, but he wanted to stay here longer. And I don't know, but I think one of the

reasons he is staying here to do his Masters program is so he can be near me.

Kim: How do you feel about that?

Rosie: Well, I want to say that I'm happy about it, and I am, but the only thing I don't want is that he sacrifices a future, because neither one of us will be happy in the long run if he does that. But if he is confident in his decisions, then it's fine.

Just as Marco and Rosie told the story of his illness and their trip to the beach, other couples use joint decision making and activity participation to reaffirm their ties to each other and their couple status. Sebastian and Marie found that deciding where to go for dates was sometimes hard, but usually successful in the end.

Kim: How do you decide what you are going to do and where you are going to go?

Sebastian: Oh, that is the worst thing of all. I'll ask her what she wants to do.

Marie: And I don't care.

Sebastian: And she'll say she doesn't care. It's a long drawn out process. In the end...

Marie: But we always want to eat, so then we decide on where we are going to eat.

Sebastian: We always...It's a long drawn out process. We usually end up somewhere though. That's the cool

thing, we always end up somewhere where we can talk or do something. That's cool.

This inability to decide on plans seemed a theme for nearly all the couple in this study. When Gregg and Michelle were asked how they decide what they are going to do on a date, their initial response was laughter and then:

Michelle: We're both like, well, like I said, we're just pretty easy going so neither of us...there's not like a person that's like, "This is what we're going to do." So it's kind of hard. It takes a little like "well maybe."

Gregg: It takes a little while.

Michelle: You know, we make like suggestions like, "We could do this or that," and then we slowly narrow it down. Everyone is like, "No, I don't care." So we slowly, slowly decide on something.

As Gregg and Michelle negotiate their plans for the evening they may be reinforcing their ties to each other and the relationship. Their use of negotiation and compromise certainly suggests the partners' opinions and happiness are important in the decision process.

Just as the shared plans and activities bring couples and those who witness their association a sense of relationship, failing to participate in coupled or relationship activities may result in the partners questioning their standing in the relationship and their

commitment to not only a relationship, but each other. Rick and Tracy rarely plan activities together. Compared to other couples they seem much less certain of where things are going and why they are together.

Kim: How do you decide what you are going to do on a date?

Tracy: Well, I have my separate group of friends and he has his separate group of friends so when we're together usually what we're doing is just staying home and watching TV, cause if we do go out, he goes with his friends and I go with my friends and if we see each other, we do.

Kim: So it's not planned, but if you run into each other it's OK?

Rick: It would be okay, but it's not like I'm going to be around her, you know. It's okay [to see her] afterwards.

When Rick and Tracy were asked about their definitions of a date, the idea of relationship was very important.

Kim: When is a dating relationship no longer new?

Rick: Like getting married and doing the same stuff over and over again, you get tired of it. You want variety.

Tracy: Well, I think you should initiate different things to do. If you're bored doing the same things, do

something different. Not necessarily change the whole situation, just do something different.

Rick: You can only do so much.

Tracy: I don't know. If you're not really dating the person then I guess you have the option to do what you want anyway. So you really shouldn't be arguing about how you're tied down, especially if you're not even going to answer questions.

Rick: But if you're not dating the person, why ask the questions like you are dating them?

Kim: I think each of you has a different definition of dating.

Rick: I think I have a different one than she has.

Tracy: Yeah, we do have a different one. I'm trying, I'm trying to work around his and keep mine at the same time.

Kim: (to Tracy) What would you say your definition is?

Tracy: Well, I don't know exactly what I'd call dating, but I say if you're talking to someone you're not limited to just talking to that one person alone because ya'll are not boyfriend and girlfriend. You can talk to other people, basically do whatever you want because you and that person don't go together. But if you're talking, you're talking because you're interested so you should show some kind of, I don't know, not necessarily

respect, but some kind of something when it comes to that person, because you're supposed to be talking to them.

Kim: (to Rick) What is your definition of dating?

Rick: Well, if you're in a relationship, then there's some kind of commitment. If you're not in a relationship, then everything is fair game.

Unlike Rick and Tracy, some couples used a co-construction of their story to add to the sense of relationship and attachment. Owen even mentioned that he and Regina often talk about when they first went out so that they remember it clearly. These couples shared the telling of the story and looked to each other for key details, often gently reminding each other when a detail was not mentioned.

Hannah and Jesse determined that a trip to Cedar Key was instrumental in their initial attraction and that kicked their relationship off.

Hannah: Remember, we went to Cedar Key and then a couple weekends later you had a party and that's when...

Jesse: Right. She went to the club like the next day [after the party] and I called her up. Then we went to a club and we started dancing together as we kinda like knew that it was a possibility.

Hannah: So, I kind of liked him when we went to Cedar Key but I didn't know that he felt anything about me.

So when I went to his house and they were having the party, that's when.

Jesse: And the next day I called her up to watch the Star Wars Trilogy...and from then on it was the way it is now. (They laugh.)

Similarly, Alex and Becky collaborate to tell of their initial meeting and the kinds of things that were unusual or special.

Kim: Tell me how you met.

Alex: Well, I...Do you want to tell the story?

Becky: It doesn't matter. I'll add as you speak.

Alex: Well, she lives in Boca and I live in Ft. Lauderdale. And I went up to Boca because I heard about this bar that was supposed to be a pretty happening place. I was there walking around with one of my best friends and I stumbled over to her and her best friend and I just started talking to them. I asked her out.

Becky: No, you asked me to dance.

Alex: Well, I asked her to dance.

Becky: And then you asked me where I went to school.

Alex: Right. Then I found out she went to Florida. "Well, I go to Florida, too. We should get together up there." Because it was during winter break. She was like "OK." So I called her when I

got back up here and we went out for the first time, and that was the beginning.

Kim: How do you feel about the way you met?

Alex: Well, honestly I think that...I don't think I would meet a girlfriend in a bar.

Becky: Exactly.

Alex: You know, those kinds of girls. You know, when you go to a bar it's to go pick-up and hook-up and then, good, that's done with. It's not...you don't expect a long term thing. But Becky is different, very different. It was weird because she doesn't go out that much and it was weird for her even to be out first of all. So it's kind of cool.

Becky: It was just that he went to UF. That was kind of weird.

Alex: Yeah, it kind of worked out cool.

Telling "our" story is a way that couples do relationship work. They can focus on the stuff that links them, just like Alex and Becky had an instant conversation topics and references because they both attend the same university. Partners use these associations to identify themselves as couples and demonstrate what they do together.

Planning is an area of dating where gender roles seem less important but the sharing or joint nature of the plans and the activity itself are very important. Through joint planning and negotiation the couple may enhance their sense

of a jointly meaningful relationship. Negotiation by the partners, rather than sole planning by one partner, ensures that each has input into and satisfaction with the decision. This may be why some decision making is so protracted and respondents laughed when asked to explain how they decide what they will do on their dates. Partners want to make sure the other's feelings and opinions are taken into account.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Assessing the Doing Gender Idea

As the opening line of this dissertation says, in many areas of daily life gender roles are changing to allow for greater flexibility in the lives of men and women. This statement does not presume that the change is easy, enjoyable, or clearly defined. As a particularly astute male respondent noted about paying for a date:

> There are so many things to look at. Like first you think "I'm supposed to traditionally pay." Then the second thing you think is "What if she wants to pay and sees my paying as an insult?" Then you think what if I am, what if it's insulting, it's uncomfortable for us to do that. It's one of those situations where you go back and forth, back and forth. In my tradition, if I ask her out on a date, I'm supposed to pay. That's just how it works. And if she ever asked me out on a date, I wouldn't expect her to pay. But if she wanted to, I would let her. That's how it is. If I ask her out, then I should pay, but I have no qualms about it. It's just a hard thing to deal with unless you know the person well.

The doing gender idea provides a way to conceptualize gender in any situation. If gender is to be a characteristic of the interaction, rather than the actor, knowing the behavior that is appropriate for the scenario is essential. As the quote presented above illustrates, in the arena of dating, couples are often at a loss as to what will be

viewed as appropriate or inappropriate gender displays. The person viewing the display may be the partner, friends, family, or society. The lens with which the gender display is viewed will vary with who is observing and expecting the behavior. The changing critic may mean that a dater is accountable for the gender displays on multiple fronts.

Throughout the interviews, participants responded "appropriately" based on gender. A seemingly innocuous question about the names the couple wanted used to identify them in the write up of the research prompted an exchange in which gender appropriateness and attribution of male and female traits were key elements.

Kim: By what names would you want to be known in the write up of the research?

Sebastian: You are going to be here forever with her trying to choose something.

Marie: Just like any name? (to Sebastian) What do you think?

Sebastian: I don't know. It's your decision. If you could be named anything in the world, what would it be? I want to be Sebastian. That's my choice.

Marie: Sebastian?

Sebastian: Sebastian. Isn't it great? Be a Disney character. That's what I was...Sebastian.

Marie: I like Mickey Mouse.

Sebastian: You can't be Mickey.

Marie: I can't be Mickey?

Sebastian: Well, you could, I knew a girl named Mickey.

Marie: I'll just be my middle name. (to Sebastian) Is that...?

Sebastian: I don't have to approve it.

Marie: Marie

Sebastian: Who the heck is Murray?

Marie: M-A-R-I-E

Sebastian: Marie. Oh, I thought you said Murray, as in Murray's bagels. Marie.

The doing gender concept is very useful in a discussion of dating because of the societal prescriptions about the behaviors assumed by men and women in a dating situation. In the current study the couples adhered to the traditional conceptions of gender more than they deviated from them. This may be the result of the length of associations of most of the couples. The advertisement asked for couples in relatively new dating relationships. This study suggests that early in dating relationships gender roles are clearly defined for couples. The gender roles are likely adhered to because, as the doing gender idea suggests, the violation of expected gender roles may result in those around an actor questioning his or her gender identity. Actors have a moral obligation to portray their prescribed gender role and may find deviating from the expected a difficult and unwelcome task.

Additionally, cultural images of appropriate dating behaviors for men and women are very strong. They are immediately recognizable and consequently they are more comfortable for the partners to portray than nontraditional or negotiated gender displays. In an early dating relationship being comfortable with the partner is important and following traditional gender displays may be a way to achieve this comfort.

Nontraditional gender displays, when appropriate, may also be used by couples. Some of the couples in the current study had negotiated unique arrangements in some areas of dating behaviors. The doing gender concept suggests that gender other than the expected may be done to make a point or when there is little threat to one being inappropriately labeled. Once an actor's sex category has been firmly established, displaying an unexpected gender behavior will be less likely to result in a negative sanction.

Within each relationship the portrayal of gender roles occurs in its own way, however, there are common experiences and expectations across the couples. The similarities and differences in the couples provide unique support for the notion that gender occurs on both the microsociological and macrosociological levels. On one hand, the couples use the guidelines of appropriate gender roles provided by their culture. Men are supposed to initiate the date, plan, provide transportation, pay, and initiate sexual activity.

Even couples who did things other than the traditional gender roles acknowledged that the roles existed. This helped to show what they were doing in opposition to the expectations. On another level, in the confines of a relationship because gender is an interactional accomplishment, couples can and do create new images of what is appropriate gender behavior within the confines of their relationship. Given that couples do not conduct their associations in complete isolation, the couples in this study tended to be quite social, their new gender displays are open to criticism from those outside the relationship.

At the same time that a couple might receive criticism, they may also receive support. In the case of negotiated gender roles, couples often share their ideas with friends, former partners, and family members. In this way persons outside the relationship may witness a different model of dating than that which is culturally prescribed along the lines of gender. It is through this display of alternate gender displays and attitudes that the cultural expectations of relationships may be expanded. This study provides support for the idea that the introduction of unexpected gender roles can enhance a couple's association and lead to more satisfaction for both partners. In initial stages of relationships, however, it is necessary to still use some of the culturally prescribed roles as guidelines because new ones are in the process of being established by the couple

and others in their group. At an initial meeting or early in the relationship, the partners have no history together and do not know the expectations of each partner. This may necessitate the use of the traditional gender roles until less traditional ones can be negotiated. Early in associations, gender displays contrary to those that are expected may be seen as too forward for women and too wimpy for men.

Social Construction of Dating

Along with changing gender roles and displays, the language that couples use to talk about their relationships is changing. Dating is no longer, if it ever was, an adequate term to cover the range of relationships from persons who casually participate in a few activities together and never see each other again to those who have a specific commitment to marry at a later time. Couples have recognized this fact and have developed a greater range of terms in an attempt to clarify where they stand with each other and how their relationship compares to others' relationships.

Dating as a term to describe an association between partners has lost some of its intensity. For most couples today dating is a casual endeavor. It is a reference to the early stages of a relationship where there are few serious ties between the partners and little if any commitment. A

lack of exclusivity is implied by the term and often a couple who spends much of their time with other friends, rather than alone, finds this a useful term to use. Seeing someone and going out are terms that were used by the participants to describe a slightly more committed relationship status than dating. In these situations the couples are not participating in dating activities with anyone else, but there is no specific commitment between them. Dating, seeing someone, going out, and talking are all terms that denote a casual association between the partners that may or may not involve sexual relations.

The marker of a relationship status for most of this study's participants was the use of the terms boyfriend and girlfriend to describe not only the partner but the kind of relationship. In using these terms there is the linking of the name of the partner with his or her status. This may add some component of attachment. This is also the point at which most couples indicated they would not be interested in nor willing to date another person at the same time they were dating the current partner. Boyfriend-girlfriend status has been constructed by the participants to be a serious form of dating, with specified duties and roles. The use of this term lets the partner and those outside the relationship know that the status is not a casual one and that the end of the relationship is not being predicted.

Future Research Agendas

In many ways this research has prompted many more questions than it has answered. The doing gender approach seems to be an effective way to discuss relationships and should inform research outside of a relationship context as well. The classroom, work setting, and family setting may be interesting areas to explore with a doing gender perspective.

The ideas of the current study could be expanded to include additional variables that may impact the display of gender. Focusing on age differences between partners could lead to unexpected variations in the portrayal of gender roles. If partners have significantly different conceptions of gender, they may find that negotiation has to occur very early in the association to keep the relationship going.

While this study provides only a snapshot of what dating is like in the 1990s, it provides some insight about the changing nature of dating throughout this century. While "dating game" may adequately describe the scripted ploys of daters in the early to mid-twentieth century, the current data suggest that partners now have more similar goals for dating outcomes. This may result in a situation that benefits both partners rather than the situation that defined dating earlier in the century, where a gain by one partner indicates a loss by the other.

The respondents in the current study did not express an artificial image of maleness or femaleness that they felt was appropriate when interacting with the partner. They suggested that more equal roles and expectations characterized their association, compared with their beliefs about what dating was like for their parents. The participants were using more jointly developed references about how their relationship works and were concerned with how believable was the partner's portrayal of gender.

The role of sex in the relations between couples in this study is different than the role of sex that Ehrmann (1964) described for daters. Given that there are few prohibitions currently on sexual relations in dating, the possibility for exploitation in today's dating has declined when compared with dating in the past. The goals of dating seem to have moved from sex for men and marriage for women to recreation and enjoyment that may include sexual intercourse, for both partners. If their goals are the same, there is a more positive situation in which all parties are having their goals met. The gender displays of both partners, then, must be more authentic and less artificial. Consequently, "dating game" may apply less today in dating than in the past. The role of sexual relations seems to have changed from a key bargaining chip for women to an expected contribution by both partners.

There is, however, an aspect of a less strict "dating game" that may be cause for concern. If there are no limits on sexual behavior today, and few guidelines in general about what is appropriate, issues of sexual aggression may be brought to the fore. Under the "dating game" Ehrmann (1964) described there was a code governing when certain intimacies were permitted. An example of this was "Don't kiss before the third date." Both males and females were aware of when behaviors would be permitted. This may have prevented men from pushing their partners too far or applying too much pressure for sex. In today's dating, however, the sexual limits are much less clear. Some partners participate in intimacies, including intercourse, early in relationships while others continue to reserve this behavior for marriage. When the rules are not clear, power may be used by one partner against the other to achieve a sexual goal. A sexually aggressive partner then, does not have clear guidelines about when sex is acceptable and may force the issue. Given that discussions about sexual aggression in dating have increased and studies indicate that one-half to three-fourths of college women have reported sexual aggression in dating (Cate and Lloyd, 1992), researchers need to consider the changing rules of dating as a factor contributing to the rates of sexual victimization.

Since this research assumes the truth of what the respondents report, relying on their opinions indicates that

the expectations and rules of dating are different today than in the past. However, there is another way to think about the "dating game" in the 1990s that suggests the notion of a game is still appropriate, but the nature of the game is different. The play for a partner now might occur not by heightened caricatures of gender, but by strict attempts to maintain what the dating culture views as authentic or natural behavior. Thus it is permissible or perhaps even expected that partners will be more androgynous and less concerned with gender displays. Now to be a successful dater, one must seem disinterested in traditional gender expectations and appear as genuine as possible. Clearly, this is an issue that should be addressed in future research about dating.

The current study is limited in that the sample population was college students. It would be useful to select a non-college population to see if the expressions of gender and the expectations of the dating partners differ. A retired population, for example, has lived in a different historical era in terms of the acceptance and expression of nontraditional gender roles; consequently, even their negotiated gender displays may be more traditional.

More than age, social class is a key variable to consider. Since social class and income have been linked to different gender attitudes on a variety of issues including women working, housework, and authority, it is likely an

important issue in predicting the displays of gender that one is like to present. It may be that race is an important factor to consider. However, in the current study there was not sufficient variety to determine any trends based on race.

With regards to dating an important question for the future asks where dating partners come from. By this one could consider whether partners are strangers at the time of their first dating activity or if they have been friends prior to beginning a dating relationship. In traditional dating the majority of daters were likely not friends before dating because much interaction took place in same sex peer groups. Currently, however, peer groups, particularly at the high school and college age are mixed sex. It could be expected that having a friendship with the partner prior to dating is easier in terms of the introduction of nontraditional gender roles. If partners have a prior association they may feel more at ease and feel less pressure to play the culturally prescribed gender role in the dating arena. Partners who meet and begin dating immediately may rely on the traditional gender roles for guidance and comfort as they get to know their new partner.

Despite some researchers' claims to the contrary (e.g., Murstein, 1980), dating is an area of family sociology that should be explored more fully. As this study has demonstrated changing gender role expectations and attitudes

alone have had a profound impact on what is considered acceptable dating behavior. As partners continue to negotiate the displays of gender that best represent their images of the ideal relationship, the cultural expectations will be molded and shaped to fit a new generation of dating couples.

APPENDIX A
DOING GENDER JOINT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Please tell me some basic demographic characteristics. What is your age, year in school, and classification?
2. Are either of you in fraternities or sororities?
3. Do you live on or off campus?
4. Do you work? Where? How many hours per week?
5. Tell me how you met.
6. How long have you known each other?
7. How long have you been dating?
8. Do you say that you are dating or do you call it something else? How do you talk about the activities you share with your partner? How do you introduce your partner to someone he/she is meeting for the first time?
9. Who initiated your first date? How did the initiation happen? How did you feel about it?
10. What do you do on most of your dates together?
11. Who generally drives and pays when you go out?
12. How do you decide where you are going to go or what you are going to do?
13. What happened on your most recent date?

14. Have you had a fight yet? How often do you fight? What do you fight about? Who wins?
15. What do you consider to be a relatively new dating relationship?
16. When is a dating relationship no longer new?
17. By what names would you like to be known in the write up of the research? Why those names?

APPENDIX B
DOING GENDER INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Describe how you want to be seen by your partner.
2. What characteristics do you posses that you most want your partner to be aware of?
3. How do you show your partner that you have these traits?
4. What kinds of things do you do for your partner that you don't do for anyone else? What kinds of things do you say to your partner that you don't say to anyone else? Do you wear anything special for your partner? If so, what?
5. How do you feel about women asking men on dates?
6. How do you feel about women planning dating activities?
7. How do you feel about women driving on dates?
8. How do you feel about women paying for dating activities?
9. What do you see as the role of the woman on a date? The role of the man?
10. Describe your sexual relationship with your current partner.

If yes to intercourse: Who initiated your first sexual contact? How did this initiation take place? What were the circumstances? How did you feel afterwards?

If no to intercourse: Do you feel that intercourse will become part of your relationship? How do you expect a sexual relationship to emerge? Who will initiate? How do you expect the initiation will occur?

11. What role do your friends play in your dating decisions or relationships?
12. What role do your parents play in your dating decisions or relationships?
13. Do you listen to same or opposite sex friends more when it comes to dating advice?
14. How many persons have you ever dated? Any seriously?
15. How committed are you to your current partner?
16. Describe your ideal partner. Why is this person ideal for you?
17. Were there any questions you expected to be asked and weren't?
18. Is there anything you think I should know about dating today?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kimberly Pettigrew Brackett was born June 1, 1968, in Jacksonville, Florida, to Virginia and David Pettigrew. She graduated magna cum laude from Jacksonville University in 1990 with B.S. degrees in sociology and psychology. She earned an M.A. in sociology in 1993 from University of Florida.

While earning her graduate degrees, Kim received a Grinter Fellowship for graduate study, membership in Alpha Kappa Delta Sociological Honor Society, and a Graduate Student Teaching Award recognizing excellence in the classroom. She served the Department of Sociology as a graduate teaching assistant throughout her training at the University. She took time off from graduate studies in July 1992 to marry her high school sweetheart and fellow UF doctorate, Patrick David Brackett, Jr.

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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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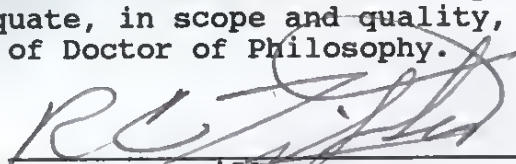

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